

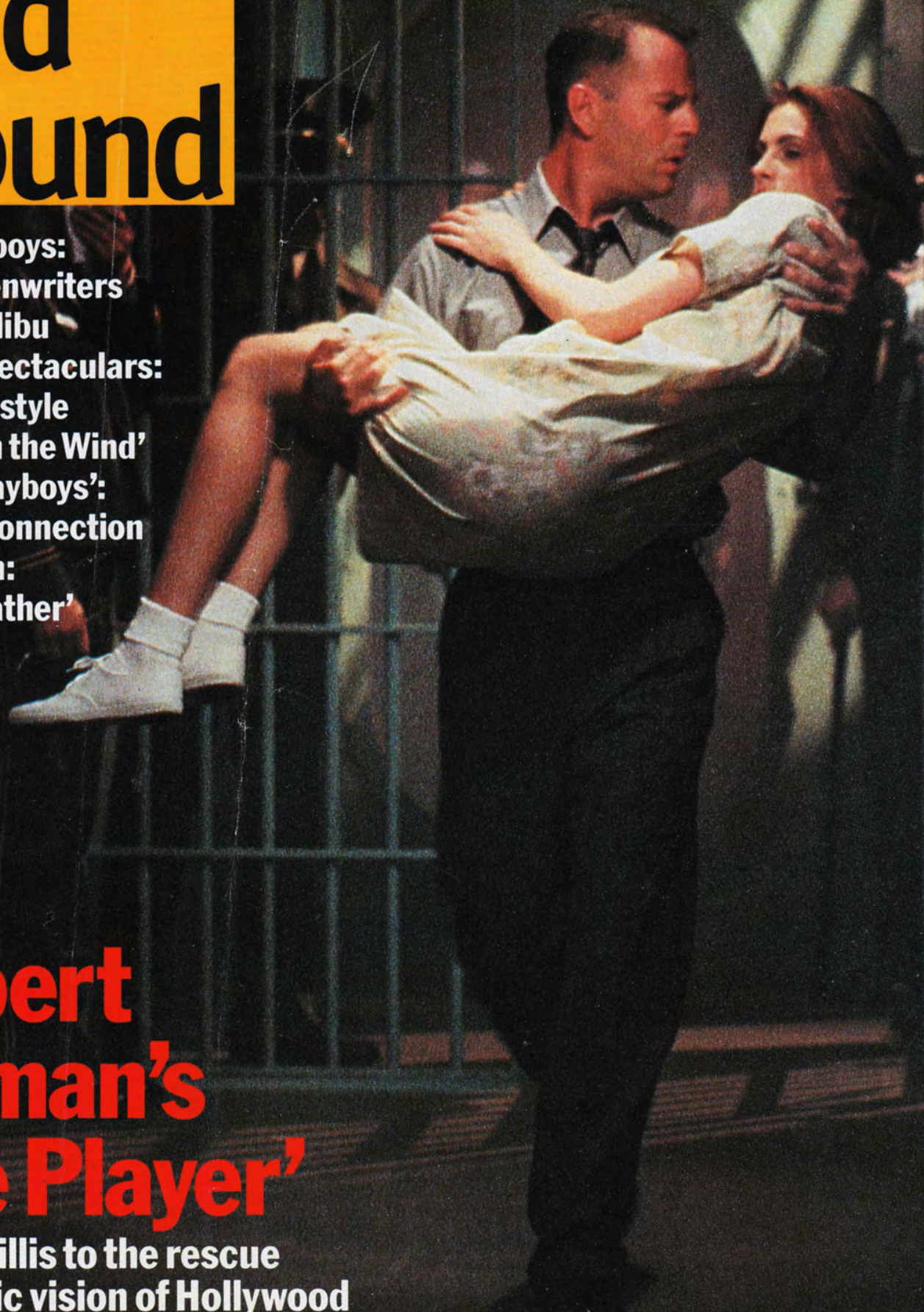
Sight and Sound

EVERY
NEW FILM
AND VIDEO
REVIEWED
INSIDE

The word boys:
four screenwriters
talk in Malibu
French spectacles:
epics 30s style
'Gone With the Wind'
to 'The Playboys':
the Irish connection
Obsession:
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Robert Altman's 'The Player'

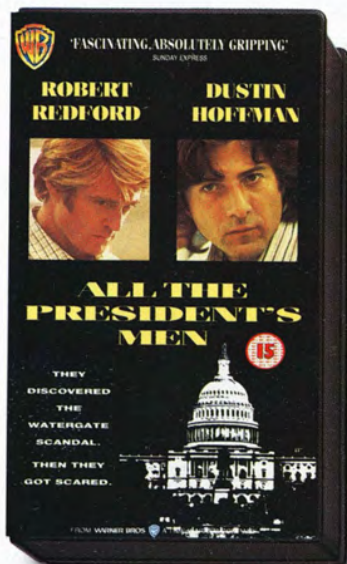
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in a comic vision of Hollywood
Plus: Altman interviewed



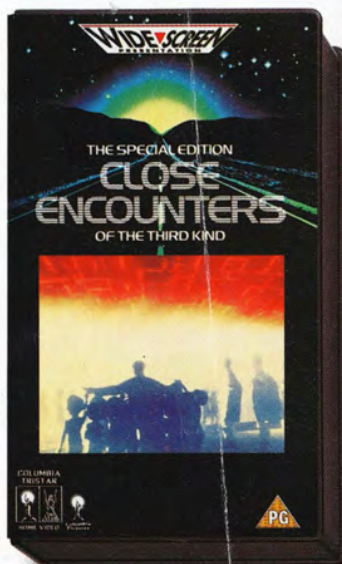
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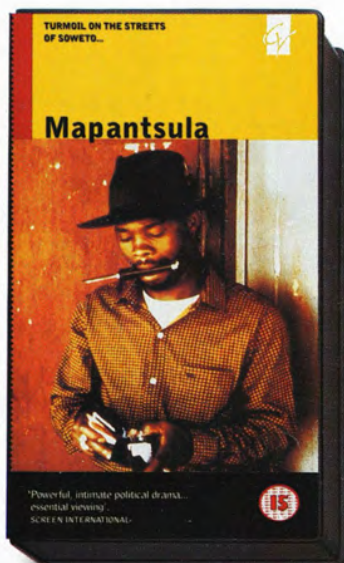
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ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN Hailed as the most devastating detective story of the century, 'All The President's Men' was released 3 years after the Watergate scandal. Two unknown reporters (Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford) took on the White House, the FBI, the CIA and the IRS in an attempt to discover the truth. They got scared, but they got the story. Winner of 4 Academy Awards.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND The special Wide Screen Presentation of Steven Spielberg's science fiction epic, portraying the arrival of flying saucers from an alien world. This cinema format version enables the splendour of the cinematography to come across on the small screen, whilst John Williams' score remains as awe-inspiring as the film itself.



MAPANTSULA The story of a petty criminal who comes to terms with political consciousness, 'Mapantsula' paints an extraordinarily vivid and frightening portrait of township life under apartheid. It's a remarkable debut feature by Oliver Schmitz and Thomas Mogotlane, filmed under difficult conditions in Soweto. "Powerful, intimate political drama... essential viewing". SCREEN INTERNATIONAL.



MR HULOT'S HOLIDAY The first film to feature Jacques Tati's Monsieur Hulot, 'Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot' is a landmark in the career of an actor/director whose influence upon comic cinema has been profound. Chaos ensues as a sleepy French coastal resort is invaded by an energetic group of holidaymakers. "An absolute joy... genius at work". DAILY MIRROR.

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Sight and Sound



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In bed together

Contributors to this issue

Lenny Borger is a Paris-based freelance critic and subtitler

Tom Carson writes on television for *LA Weekly*

Michael Eaton is an award-winning screenwriter

Peter Goodwin is writing a book on the recent television franchise bids

Julian Graffy is senior lecturer in Russian at SSEES, University of London

Peter Keogh is film critic of the *Boston Phoenix*

Mark Kermode is writing a book on *The Exorcist*

Julia Knight is author of the recently published *Women and the New German Cinema*

Kim Newman is a freelance film critic and novelist

David Robinson is the author of many books on cinema, the most recent on music and silent film

Kevin Rockett is co-author of *Cinema and Ireland*

Amy Taubin is writing a book on *Taxi Driver*

Lynne Tillman is a New York-based novelist and critic whose latest novel, *Cast in Doubt*, will be published in the US in September

Sharon Willis is director of the Susan B Anthony Center for Women's Studies, University of Rochester

Michael Wilmington's books include one on John Ford, of which he is co-author

The announcement that Palace, Britain's largest independent film producer and distributor, has collapsed owing creditors up to £30 million is a measure of the difficulties that face the new Department of National Heritage, which will look after the film industry and television, as well as much else.

The news that Palace has gone "into administration" is – if hardly unexpected – devastating for those in the film industry. Many of them had seen Labour as the cavalry charging over the hill to save Our Cinema and now believe they have enough on their plate having to cope with a new Tory administration without having to face the implications of the collapse of a major producer.

There are signs that Palace's production arm can be saved by grafting it on to another film company and creating an international group. But it is not only the production and film distribution functions of the Palace group that should concern us, but also Palace Video.

Although video distribution has little status in Britain – this place loves nothing better than a pecking order – video companies such as Palace, Connoisseur, Artificial Eye and a host of others are critical in sustaining a film culture. Londoners may have had a reasonable chance of catching Derek Jarman's *Edward II* at a cinema near them, but outside the capital the opportunity to see it was severely restricted. Its release by Palace Video has given a much wider range of people access to it. By means of video, British art films can now reach parts of the population earlier works could not. And of course to recognise the importance of video in distributing new films is not to forget its equally important role in making available 'classic' film to new constituencies.

It's not clear whether David Mellor's new department will attend to such a lowly creature as video distributors, since it already seems to have its hands full with film, television, the Arts Council, sport, the National Lottery and tourism. But at least with its new remit – which brings together film and television and the Arts Council in a single Ministry –

the Department of Heritage has the chance to recognise the interdependence of the various institutions committed to the moving image and to demand that those institutions acknowledge their shared interests and responsibilities.

The title of the department, we ought to be frank, is not encouraging and it is easy to imagine some of the unfortunate ways it might develop. Since its responsibilities include tourism, it is possible that the arts could be packaged as a heritage attraction, with anything that can't easily be seen in these terms discarded. More likely, as John Major, with his vision of One Nation, bids to be the Stanley Baldwin *de nos jours*, the arts could be asked to be what they were in the 20s, the glue that binds together all people, whatever their social differences.

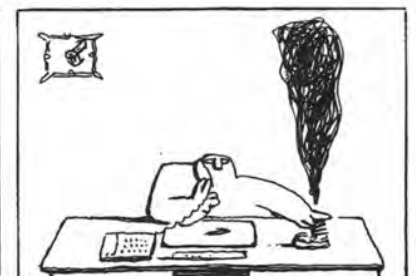
Yet even when one has imagined the worst scenario for the new department, there still exist exciting possibilities. David Mellor sounds more emollient on the BBC than did his predecessor, and it is important that we have a serious debate on this national institution. For the truth is, over the last thirty years television has been to Britain what Hollywood is to the US: the place where people turn for their national myths and challenging and entertaining narratives. Jarman's *Edward II* was, after all, a *Screen 2* production; and a quick glance at Cannes shows that nine of the films there have been given financial support by Channel 4. The film industry has to be persuaded of the importance of television to its own future, not as a prelude to grovelling at television's feet, but so film and television can work together without the (all-too-often) mutual suspicion and recrimination.

If David Mellor can insist that television takes its responsibilities to film seriously – and that is not always the case at present – and equally demand that the film industry gives up its residual snootiness towards television, then he will have made a start to ensuring that the crisis at Palace doesn't also signal the last rites for film made in Britain.

Satyajit Ray and Marlene Dietrich died as we prepared to go to press. Our tributes to them will appear in a future issue.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, the dailies are the best I've seen in a long while. The performances are sharp, the camerawork mouthwatering, the sets are marvellous... it's so good it's finally hit me that the script stinks. So I'm going to close the picture down for a rethink.'

In memoriam



Marlene Dietrich
Born: 27 December
1901, Berlin
Died: 6 May 1992, Paris

Satyajit Ray
Born: 2 May 1921,
Calcutta
Died: 23 April 1992,
Calcutta



Turin's 'Da Sodoma a Hollywood'

David Robinson

The London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and Turin's 'Da Sodoma a Hollywood' – separated by only one week – are the major European events dedicated to homosexual cinema. This year was Turin's seventh edition, London's sixth.

The differences between the two events – despite their massive programme overlap – bring into focus the issue of a *raison d'être* for lesbian and gay festivals. Are they still political demonstrations for and by a socially disadvantaged community (no festivals are specifically designated 'heterosexual'), or are they developing more positive and sophisticated roles? Can they claim to broaden the general public debate on sexual society and variety, or do they address the committed minority? Is their object exhibition or debate, social information or film aesthetic? London describes itself as "a showcase... your only chance to see the widest range of new and rare lesbian and gay movies". Turin is overtly dedicated to debate and the search for a distinctive homosexual aesthetic.

Attitudes are conditioned, of course, by public perception of the event. Even a nod of approval or fifty-pennyworth of help from a local authority would clobber London with all the majesty of Clause 28. Turin, on the contrary, has the support, financial and moral, of the Italian Ministry of Spectacle and Tourism, the city and province of Turin, and the region of Piedmont. Predictably, the local community is not unanimous in its approval: a fascist group promised a protest this year but in the end didn't turn up. But the cultural authorities unequivocally declare their belief in the social and cultural importance of the event and the distinction it brings to the city.

The Turin festival, in consequence, proclaims much more confidence in itself than London. There is a sense of disavowal and apology in the flip and campy tone in which the London programme notes are couched. Turin can afford the luxury of being visibly serious.

Gay and lesbian cinema tends perforce to be marginal and guerrilla – independent, low-budget or item slots in television magazines. A large part of London's huge programme consists of video production, and most feature films which appear at London and Turin are minimal budget pictures from the US independents.

Only in Britain?

This year's most talented work from this area, P. J. Castelloneta's *Together Alone*, took the top prize in Turin, to add to awards from the Berlin Panorama and San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Festival. This ninety-minute feature, made for \$7,000 in a single set, makes compelling viewing out of a post-coital bedroom debate between two strangers, ranging over issues of bisexuality, Aids, morality, fidelity and psychology that their one-night fling has provoked. The film's outstanding asset is the script; currently, in an unusual reversal of the stage-



Playing the part: Michel Piccoli as Genet in Niko Papatakis' controversial 'Les Equilibristes'

to-screen process, *Together Alone* is being adapted for the theatre.

Most production on lesbian and gay themes is limited to shorts and documentaries. The predominance of English-language production is striking – forty-one out of fifty-two new titles in Turin, 111 out of 133 in London's video-boosted total. Many of the best British productions originated in Channel 4's *Out on Four*: Stuart Marshall's documentary on Aids activism in America, *Over Our Dead Bodies*; Susan Ardill's joyous tribute to country and western lesbians, *Stand on Your Man*; Pratibha Parmar's *Khushi*, about homosexuality in India. Turin also paid tribute to a gallant British team of independent pioneers of gay film in Britain, Ron Peck and Paul Hallam. Seen in this alien context, the range and sensitivity of British television's treatment of homosexual themes appears remarkable. An adventure like *Off the Rails* – in which twenty-year-old Stephen Hawthorne used BBC2's ninety minute video diary slot as a plea to win his parents' acceptance and understanding of his sexuality – could probably happen nowhere else.

Gay festivals always display a keen sense of history. Turin's centrepiece was a homage to Jean Genet. Considering that his only realised film was the twenty-five minute, silent *Un Chant d'amour* (1950), Genet's continuing influence on cinema is surprising. Of half a dozen scripts begun by Genet and brought to various stages of completion, only one, *Les Rêves interdits*, was realised, as Tony Richardson's *Mademoiselle*. Turin expanded last year's NFT 'The Cinema of Saint Genet' to a total of twenty-four films – ranging, inevitably, from Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks*, which possibly influenced *Un Chant d'amour*, to Todd Haynes' *Poison*, the best recent evocation of the Genet mythol-

ogy – and assembled a distinguished group of Genet scholars to demonstrate that six years after his death, the writer still provokes fierce controversy.

The latest addition to the Genet canon, and the most bitter current issue, is Niko Papatakis' *Les Equilibristes*, excoriated by Genet disciples. Papatakis knew Genet personally for more than forty years, having first met him in 1943, when Papatakis was a twenty-five-year-old immigrant without papers. Later, as the founder of the fashionable cabaret 'La Rose Rouge', Papatakis financed and produced *Un Chant d'amour*. In 1962 – after a stay in the US, where he produced John Cassavetes' revolutionary *Shadows* – Papatakis sought to film *The Maids*, but Genet refused, advising him instead to return to the original news-story source of the play. Papatakis directed the resulting film *Les Abysses*, and won Genet's approval – not least for the metaphor the film provided for French colonialist attitudes during the Algerian war. Towards the end of Genet's life, however, there was a falling-out between them involving the commercial exploitation of *Un Chant d'amour*, which Genet by this time disowned.

Personal betrayal

Papatakis was on hand in Turin to defend *Les Equilibristes* and rebut charges of personal betrayal. He insists that his film is a just reflection of Genet's relationship with the young German-Algerian acrobat, Abdallah. By 1956, Genet, frustrated in his writing, began to seek ways of creating through other people. He loved the circus, and set himself to develop Abdallah as a star acrobat. Abdallah's career came to an end after two serious accidents; Genet lost interest, and turned his attention to training a young racing driver (the son of Lucien, his former lover, who acts in *Un Chant d'amour*). Abdallah was reduced to the role of the racer's assistant and mechanic. In time he was dropped entirely and finally he committed suicide.

Papatakis has changed the name and details, but the essentials remain. Michel Piccoli plays Genet, Lilah Dadi plays Abdallah and Polly Walker is Genet's fashionable confidante. At 130 minutes, the film is over-long, but compensates with the elegance that Papatakis has achieved in the uncluttered design, William Lubtchansky's Eastman colour and his own shrewd script. Papatakis presents the Genet he recalls personally: knowingly charming, ruthless, unembarrassed to exploit his fame. Papatakis feels that for all his declared political sympathies, Genet had become a bourgeois and reactionary in the "colonialist-paternalist" attitudes reflected in his treatment of Abdallah.

Far from betraying Genet, Papatakis claims: "I could have introduced real-life incidents that would have made the film much more cruel. For instance, how at the funeral Genet insisted that Abdallah's mother and sister keep far away from the graveside, where he himself stood, wearing an arab head-dress. He was always, as Sartre said, the actor".

'At the funeral Genet insisted that Abdallah's mother and sister keep far away from the graveside, where he himself stood, wearing an arab head-dress'

Hopping and the helicopter

Tom Carson

At least to the majority of Angelenos who watched the whole thing on television, there was one main difference between the great Los Angeles riot of 1992 and the racial upheaval that had rocked the Watts section of the same city twenty-seven years earlier. In every sense, the 1965 riot took place in black and white. In every sense, the one this spring took place in colour.

The riot's polyglot, multi-racial character may have been unprecedented in US history. The many forms it took ranged from intra-minority antagonism – notoriously, black rioters targeted the Asian-owned stores in their neighbourhoods – to nihilistic solidarity among the city's dispossessed and demoralised (people of all ethnic backgrounds participated in the looting). There were even some episodes of boundary-crossing chivalry: during the forty-eight hours the riot raged unchecked, among the most moving images were those showing motley groups of volunteers, of all races and most classes, helping the city's overburdened fire department fight the fires.

No less unprecedented were the speed and comprehensiveness of the television coverage which gave the millions watching at home a virtual God's-eye view of how riots grow. Los Angeles' seven major television news outlets – the local affiliates of the three big networks plus the city's four independent stations – went live continuously from the afternoon of 29 April, when a suburban jury including no African Americans acquitted four police officers charged with brutally beating a black motorist named Rodney King, until the early afternoon of 1 May, when the tide of chaos the verdict set in motion finally ebbed.

Leapfrogging around the dial

Whether owing to a comparative paucity of resources or to aloofness on the part of the city's more settled Mexican-American community towards the Central American immigrants who among the Latino population were those most involved in the rioting as both participants and victims, KMEX, LA's main Spanish-language news outlet, produced little live coverage. Even the national cable news service CNN broadcast only sporadic reports on the disaster engulfing LA. But on their own, the local news operations generated a surfeit of images, if not information. Each station had at least half a dozen separate crews relaying live reports from a succession of trouble spots. And each station, of course, had its own whirllybird.

In fact, one of the riot's minor miracles was that the toll of dead included no fatalities from helicopter collisions. Often, watching an aerial view on one station, you'd see a helicopter from another news operation dart into the frame – the station logo on its side amounting to free advertising that might induce you to switch channels if the rival helicopter seemed nearer the action. However, most viewers needed no cues to keep leapfrogging around the dial; it was a form of riot punctuation that



Airborne television: a dispenser of information or guardian of order?

amounted to a nervous tic.

Simply as a feat of instant transcription, the television coverage was mind-boggling. Airborne cameras began hovering over the intersection where the riot first erupted at almost the moment trouble started. They appeared before the police did – several hours before. As a result, the home audience was able not only to watch the progress of events, but to clock the authorities' failure to respond. (The LA Police Department's cynical and/or incompetent delay in intervening to prevent the turmoil's escalation into a full-blown riot has since been widely criticised.)

By nightfall on 29 April, most stations were cross-cutting with dexterity among a steadily increasing number of locations – the police headquarters complex where a peaceful crowd of demonstrators was visibly altering into a vengeful mob, the black church where community leaders had gathered in a futile attempt to channel rage at the King verdict on to non-destructive paths, and the streets of LA's huge black and Latino South-Central district, where more buildings kept being set ablaze. Live audio feeds of speeches calling for calm were superimposed on live video of the fires; split screens showed the action underway at different sites simultaneously.

Yet at every level more meaningful than the flood of images – a triumph of technology, not understanding – the television version of the riots wasn't only inadequate, but misleading. Aside from the local anchors who, lacking a TelePrompter, were simply in over their heads, the problem was the



The late show: the TV cameras beat the authorities to it

'Live audio feeds of speeches calling for calm were superimposed on live video of the fires; split screens showed the action underway at different sites simultaneously'

confusion of identities that always compromises television news in a crisis: is it a dispenser of information or a guardian of order? In the vacuum left by the feeble official response, television took on the job of moral arbiter. Newscasters characterised the rioters in marginalising if not depersonalising terms ("thugs", "hooligans" and "savages" were all engaged in "mindless violence"). Sternly, they mouthed unprovable generalisations, such as, "This has nothing to do with the Rodney King verdict".

All this made it evident that LA's television news served the public less than it did the social order. Ambiguities we could see perfectly well for ourselves on our screens – above all the cross-pollination of minority anger suggesting that class may outweigh even race in LA's lower depths – were never acknowledged by the newscasters. Only a few spotty attempts were made to talk about the abiding economic and social grievances the King case had put a spark to. Television's priority wasn't to make sense of the event, but to categorise it in a palatable way that would confirm the biases of the middle-class and affluent sectors of Los Angeles, immunising them to moral doubt.

Finding scapegoats

Once the fires waned and the city got down to the urgent business of finding scapegoats, television received its share of blame. Ironically, most of the criticism came from conservatives who charged that television had encouraged people to join the riot simply by putting it on the screen. Whether the would-be censors knew it or not, in effect they were asking television to assume – or, from a leftist viewpoint, acknowledge – a role as the authorities' media arm.

But the real journalistic issue was the extent to which the local stations, unbidden, had done just that. On the grounds that such talk risked inflaming the situation, their street reporters cut off any rioter who spoke too militantly or ideologically. Even granting the newscasters' quandary – this rhetoric probably *did* risk inflaming the situation – the upshot was that no rationale for the riot coming from one of its participants got aired without interference. This made the "mindless violence" interpretation comfortably QED.

Explanations? US television outlets are large-scale business enterprises by definition, and the white-collar professionals who work for them belong to the prosperous middle class in salary, if not outlook. Nothing could be more natural than for television newsrooms to view society's other institutions as peers, if not allies. That's why, during the riot, television's rhetorical (though not visual) role amounted to providing agitprop for the status quo. On the evening of 30 April, looters outside a furniture store tried to make off with a sofa precariously perched on their car roof. Along with the police, a helicopter belonging to a local station gave chase. (It was fabulous television.) Midway down the block, the sofa fell off, and the station's enthusiastic anchorman exclaimed on the air, "Hooray for our side".

Taking over

Michael Eaton

When I saw the cover of the new publication *Projections* (edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue, Faber & Faber, £9.99) my spirits rose. It promises to be an annual "forum for film-makers" in which practitioners can speak about their craft unmediated by the self-advancing prattlings of ill-informed critics who rarely know anything about the joys and sorrows of getting a film, any film, off the launch pad. Having myself struggled to make the difficult transition from the academy to the whore house, it has always been my experience that the occupants of the latter establishment can invariably speak more cogently and with more authority about how to turn a trick.

However, even allowing for the fact that the contributors are predominantly anglophone and exclusively (apart from ten lines from Jane Campion) male – sociological biases which I hope will be corrected in future years – the bulk of the volume promises much and delivers little. There is an inspired defence of the power of entertainment to change the world by Sam Fuller, which shows that his theory of film-making has changed little since *Pierrot le fou* – but it runs to less than two pages. There's a moving poem by Tony Harrison to the memory of George Cukor – but that runs to less than one page.

There are, though, some revelations. Hal Hartley tells us that his script for *Surviving Desire* was written over the course of four weeks – to read it, one would think four hours would have been sufficient to include even the re-writes and a covering letter. Nestor Almendros, in remembering the actresses he has been privileged to photograph, reveals that reification is the 'cine' qua non which lies at the core of the cinematographer's art. And Emeric Pressburger (in a piece which has a patina of honesty which may be nothing more than a revered old Hungarian's disguised mendacity) confesses how, as an impoverished young would-be writer in Berlin, he blagged his way into UFA by writing a series of articles which presented him as an expert on film theory "who had never seen a script, met an actor or set foot in a studio".

But the greatest disappointment in *Projections* resides in the fact that the pieces purportedly by some of the most interesting names on the cover turn out to be nothing more than interviews. I was quite keen to read River Phoenix reflecting on working with Gus Van Sant until I noticed this was a reprint from *Interview* magazine, whose subeditors, it must be said, have the consistent aspiration to re-cast the words of their participants into that mould of inspired daftness which was the favoured idiom of the magazine's founder (example: Q: What's your favourite dessert? A: Um, I don't have one... chocolate cake. Andy would never have hesitated: when asked his favourite ice-cream flavour he replied, without missing a beat, "white"). So although the short interview with Michael Mann on *The Last of the Mohicans* shows him to be every bit as intelligent as one would expect in his delibera-

tions about the contradictory demands of history and story, there is in the very structure of the interview, in the encounter between maker and critic, some quality that always manages to get lost. You might call this quality 'candour', you might go further and call it 'truth'.

Why is it that the interviewee must inevitably be predisposed towards dissemblance? Of course, few can afford to be honest about their collaborators or about other people's films – who knows when they might have to work with these people again? Graham Greene once said (in an interview, of course) that he always lied to and concealed himself from journalists: "It has nothing to do... with my personality. It's simply that I don't like people regarding me as a source of articles written for their own profit". But perhaps the answer lies deeper than pragmatic self-protection: no one wants to talk about work in progress because to expose its embryonic existence seems mystically guaranteed to stymie its chances of birth and, as for things that are up and running... maybe it's best, superstitiously, to leave well alone.

How surprising, then, that the longest piece in this book more than vindicates the project's claim to cut out the critical middle-man and allow us unmediated access to the mind and thoughts of the film-maker. Throughout 1991, John Boorman kept a journal (*Bright Dreams, Hard Knocks*) which is almost so candid as to be painful about his own personal and professional set-backs in a movie world which he describes as "a mixture of art and money, greed and generosity, sex, glamour, vulgarity, envy and com-

'No one wants to talk about work in progress because to expose its embryonic existence seems mystically guaranteed to stymie its chances of birth'

passion, high aspirations and low life. Who can resist such a mixture?"

Among the genuine revelations on offer is a conversation with Stanley Kubrick in which the old isolate tells Boorman that the problem with scripts lies in the way they are formatted – because dialogue is traditionally centred on the page, the eye is naturally drawn to it, putting undue emphasis on what is said, diminishing what is to be seen. Kubrick has taken to overturning the convention – centring the description and stretching out the dialogue. When this is demonstrated one can't help feeling that Kubrick has a point.

Boorman catalogues his doomed attempts to raise finance for films which concern themselves with, in his phrase, "the life of the spirit, a life that is hidden from us by the hard surfaces of the waking world, this Other Country that we, otherwise, only enter in the confused tumult of dreams". He is forced to conclude that most people spend more time working on projects they don't end up making than on the ones that do, miraculously, find finance.

Perhaps his publisher might do us a favour and extend its film list by bringing into light screenplays of movies which never got made, because the tax shelter money from the Cayman Islands turned out to be mythic, because that Italian producer first encountered at Cannes turned out to be a scam artist, or because the vision on offer contradicted a studio executive's opinion of what the market could bear. More and more, it seems that the films that don't get made may well turn out to be the ones worth seeing.



Hal Hartley, whose new film 'Simple Men' opens in Cannes, where John Boorman, co-editor of 'Projections', is on the jury

Who wants Channel 5?

Peter Goodwin

When a new national television channel is announced you might think there would be a ripple of press interest in what it will show. You would be wrong. Bidders are currently being invited to apply to run the new Channel 5, but the only thing that has seized the imagination of the media journalists is the prospect of a 'video nightmare'. The channel will use frequencies to which most video recorders are currently tuned. So millions of them will have to be retuned to avoid interference.

The invitations to apply for the licence to run Channel 5 were issued in April, after a long delay caused by the video problem. Applications for the licence to run the channel should be in by 7 July, and the ITC will make a decision on the winner by November. The channel will come on air some time in 1993 or perhaps as late as 1994. But what is Channel 5 for, and what difference will it make to the total package of television we are offered?

Channel 5 was conceived out of a lengthy affair between the advertising industry and the Department of Trade and Industry in the mid-80s. The advertising buyers successfully lobbied that ITV was a monopoly seller of television advertising air time and needed some competition. The government responded by setting up the Peacock Committee to explore the possibility of advertising on the BBC. Peacock turned that down. So, as a poor second best for the advertising lobby, the DTI commissioned a report to see if a new advertising-funded terrestrial channel could be cobbled together out of available frequencies. It could, although it can only cover about three-quarters of the UK population.

In those days the DTI had some influence on broadcasting policy, so Channel 5 made its appearance in the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper and from there cruised into the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Channel 5 was to be a national channel with virtually the same legal requirements as Channel 3 – news, current affairs, religious and children's programming together with a requirement to provide a range "calculated to appeal to a wide variety of tastes and interests". And the Channel 5 licence was to be awarded in the same way as Channel 3 – highest bid after passing a quality threshold.

Having fathered Channel 5, the advertising industry left the child to fend for itself. It is one thing for agencies to be in favour of more competition in television advertising in principle; committing their good money to nurturing the infant competitor is a different matter. But just as the advertising industry lost interest, Channel 5 became a cause for municipal socialists. More precisely, the location of the channel became a cause for a number of Labour councils in Scotland and the north of England who were concerned to get a few hundred jobs and an extra slice of television glamour for their patch. During the debate on the Broadcasting Act, everyone, including the then broadcasting minister (now back in charge) David Mellor, expressed the hope that the new channel's

centre would be well north of London. However, no one cared to put it in the legislation, so the ITC now says that the location of the channel cannot be a factor in its decisions.

The one Channel 5 aspirant to link northern location to programme strategy rather than simply be associated with a particular city has been *Brookside* creator, Phil Redmond. Redmond argued from the start that the new channel should have a "non-metropolitan" feel to it. Quite what that means has never been spelt out – prospective Channel 5 bidders like to keep their plans to themselves lest a rival borrows them. But "non-metropolitan" at least looks like the beginnings of a strategy for doing something that other channels are not doing, and a northern twist fits well with the fact that a good part of the 25 per cent of the population who will not be able to receive Channel 5 is to be found along the south coast. There is, however, a problem about the non-metropolitan slant. Some transmitters will switch on earlier than others and the obvious one to start earliest is the one with the biggest coverage – London.

One other slant to Channel 5 gathered many nods of approval during the passage of the Broadcasting Act through parliament – the idea of making it a network of thirty or so city-based stations, with some common programming but perhaps two or three hours a day of local programming for each city. The concept was the brainchild of then Independent Broadcasting Authority executive, Chris Rowley. The appeal of the idea was that it would do something that BBC and even ITV (which is regional rather than city-based) did not, and which satellite could not do, because it transmits over a far wider area than a terrestrial transmitter. The city-based Channel 5 model was, said David Mellor in 1990, "an important idea... It could be the basis of a serious submission, which on quality grounds could carry all before it". Such a bid could, Mellor indicated, be the beneficiary of the clause whereby a licence could be awarded to an applicant other than the highest bidder under "exceptional circumstances".

Today, the ITC seems to think otherwise. It will take bids on the city-based model along with any others, but insists it has no power to favour a bid specifically because it is city-based. In the two years since Mellor made his glowing comment, the city-based model has come in for much unfavourable commercial scrutiny. Put crudely, making local programmes in several cities costs considerably more than having a single national schedule of programmes, and few observers think that specifically local advertising revenue will come anywhere near to making up the extra cost. Like "a base north of London" and "a non-metropolitan slant", the city-based network option has been shifted to the margins by a combination of commercial calculation and regulatory caution.

Rowley left the IBA and teamed up with Canadian Moses Znaimer to develop his plan in the form of FiveTV. Znaimer runs an intriguing and profitable Toronto local television station, Citytv. Citytv's schedule is a mixture of movies, chat shows, popular music and local news. "The look of Citytv is ostenta-

'Most outside bets are on Channel 5 going down with an almighty crash – like the recent demise of French advertising-funded general entertainment channel, La Cinq. But the irony would come if Channel 5 succeeded...'

tiously hip", observes Toronto film critic John Harkness. "They have no standing sets, and even their newsreaders are unconfined by the traditional desk". Hip – and also cheap. It may well be experience of making this sort of cheap programming that Znaimer brings to FiveTV's Channel 5 bid. But when that bid sees the light of day, it is likely to mark a considerable retreat from Rowley's idea of thirty local stations.

The two, or at most three, other likely bids will also probably make some nod in the direction of local programming at some unspecified time in the future. But their central thrust will be national. They will propose some kind of general entertainment channel (if only because the ITC's requirements prevent a thematic channel such as all sports or all movies). They will have rather less programming originally produced for their channel than ITV or BBC (the ITC has deliberately lowered the requirements it initially set), but will still need rather more than, say, Sky One. All will probably aim for a slightly younger audience than ITV (which is older than the population as a whole).

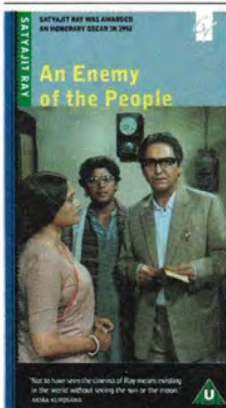
Possibly, within these parameters, something very new that really is not being done now in British broadcasting will emerge. Possible – but unlikely. What we are more likely to get is something that goes back to the original advertising lobby concept of competing directly for a slice of the ITV market, although significantly, one potential bidder thinks that another advertising-financed general channel will not be viable and therefore proposes to be primarily subscription-based.

What is likely to distinguish the 'national' bidders is the size of the budget they propose to spend on programming. Commercially, it's a chicken and egg problem. Do you start spending high, in the expectation that by doing so you will win a significant audience? Or do you start more modestly, but with the danger that you may not make any significant dent in the audiences of the higher-funded channels?

Either way it's a huge gamble. And the advantages of making that sort of gamble on Channel 5 rather than on a satellite channel are not immediately obvious. Choosing the Channel 5 option weighs the gambler with the costs of retuning several million videos and conforming to the ITC's programme mix requirements. Its advantage may be cheaper, more immediate access to significantly more homes than satellite alone could deliver (up to one-third of the homes covered by Channel 5 will get an acceptable picture without a new aerial; the rest will need to spend only £30 to £80 on one).

Most outside bets are on Channel 5 going down with an almighty crash – like the recent demise of French advertising-funded general entertainment channel, La Cinq. But the irony would come if Channel 5 succeeded in winning a significant chunk of audience and advertising revenue. If that happened, a few other business plans – from Sky One to some of the weaker ITV companies – would need drastic revision, as their hoped-for share of the limited advertising expenditure is cut back.

June Releases from Connoisseur Video



An Enemy of the People

Director: Satyajit Ray/Certificate U

The death of Satyajit Ray in April of this year has left a gaping void in the ranks of world class film makers working today. Supremely accomplished in every aspect of film making, from set design to composing scores, the great Indian director has left a rich legacy of work.

An Enemy of the People, Ray's adaptation of the Ibsen play, was shot in unusual circumstances, with Ray surrounded, on set, by a team of doctors and cardiologists monitoring his health. The film is different in many aspects to his earlier works, but is nonetheless rich in elegant camera work and powerful dialogue.

Ray's outstanding *Apu Trilogy* is also available on Connoisseur.



An Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano

Director: Nikita Mikhalkov/Certificate U

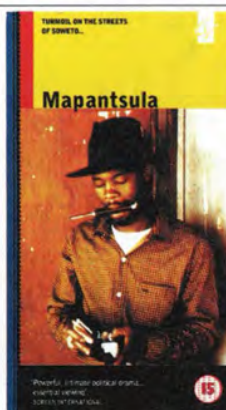
Another fine example of a literary work, this time with Mikhalkov bringing to the screen the short story *Platonov* by Chekhov. Platonov the man is played by Aleksandr Kaliagin, who gives a rivetting performance as a man trying to face up to his life. This is Mikhalkov's second film with Chekhov at the core (his *Dark Eyes* is also available on Connoisseur) and it prompted the French cinema magazine *Télérama* to write: 'Mikhalkov hasn't adapted Chekhov: he seems to have passed him the camera'.



The Ascent

Director: Larisa Shepitko/Certificate PG

Winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1977, this is a gripping and chilling tale of Russian partisans at the hands of their German captors in 1942. It was the last film to have been directed by one of the former Soviet Union's foremost women directors, Larisa Shepitko, and it boasts a powerful score by Alfred Schnittke. The Toronto Festival of Festivals wrote: 'Shepitko's last film has an intensity and sharp beauty that make it a fitting memorial to her talent'.



Mapantsula

Director: Oliver Schmitz/Certificate 15

This caustic drama was shot on the streets of Soweto in 1988, before the dismantling of apartheid had begun. Having convinced the South African authorities that they were making a simple 'gangster' movie, Schmitz and his co-writer Thomas Mogotlane (also the star of the film) then set about making a film which was described by Screen International as a 'powerful, intimate political drama'. As a debut for both men it speaks volumes for the talent we can expect to emerge from South Africa.

CONNOISSEUR VIDEO/ SIGHT AND SOUND READERS' OFFER

Colour Me Lurid (The Weird World of George Kuchar)

£9.99

Described by John Waters as the 'ultimate underground film maker', Kuchar took kitsch to his heart and made an art form of it. With well over fifty low budget masterpieces of schlock to his name Kuchar's place in film history is assured. This compilation brings together four fine examples of Kuchar as auteur and 'star', including the infamous *Hold Me While I'm Naked*. This video is available to *Sight and Sound* readers for the special price of £9.99 plus £1.50 postage and packing.



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Robert Altman's savagely comic film about the Hollywood of deals and betrayals captures the American way of life, argues Michael Wilmington

"If you want to tell people the truth, you better make them laugh, or they'll kill you". George Bernard Shaw

● Behind Robert Altman's *The Player* – with its scintillating, wickedly funny views of the new studio system – lies a whole tradition of 'inside Hollywood' movies: the romantic sentiments of *A Star is Born* (1937 and 1954), the gothic iconoclasm of *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) or *Inside Daisy Clover* (1965), the killer gloom of *In a Lonely Place* (1950) or *The Big Knife* (1955), the fancy despair of *Fedora* (1942) or *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954), the mordant self-justification of *Sullivan's Travels* (1941), the glamorous gossip of *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952), the tensely stylised political turmoil of *The Last Tycoon* (1976), the surreal nightmarishness of *Barton Fink* (1991). It's a sixty-year procession of dream factory myths with their imprisoned writers, bedazzled would-be stars and rejected older ones.

Yet here Altman and screenwriter-novelist Michael Tolkin summon up the shades only to

shatter them; in this cautionary tale about a cold-blooded, edgy studio executive (Tim Robbins' Griffin Mill) who accidentally kills a screenwriter, the film-makers take us inside with a comic ferocity and deadpan verisimilitude none of the others can match. It's a 'belly of the beast' movie, as much about systems as people. The characters, viewed from a mockingly Olympian perspective, are both clowns and pawns; the film is about players and their play, gamblers and the rules of the game.

'It's only a movie,' Altman tells us throughout *The Player* – from the moment his first, virtuosic nine minute long crane shot begins winding across sidewalks and peeping through windows at Hollywood Center Studios (the old Zoetrope), to the very last image of the movie's stunningly bleak happy ending: a pan up to a waving palm tree that seems drenched in both sunlight and smog. Only a movie it is (just as *The Long Goodbye* is 'only' a film noir, or *McCabe and Mrs Miller* 'only' a Western). But though *The Player* has been hailed as Altman's return to Hollywood, it's more accurately Hollywood's return to Altman.

The source – Michael Tolkin's black 1988 novel about a studio executive coping with crime, punishment, lust and dreams – is eerily perfect for Altman's direction. It's a Petronian satire injected into a high-concept thriller and also probably (if we remember Tolkin's own directorial debut, *The Rapture*) a twisted fable about God's silence in a morally bankrupt world. The film reveals Griffin's milieu of studios, deals and high-level schmoozing, as, for him, it falls apart nightmarishly on almost every level. After he kills screenwriter David Kahane (Vincent D'Onofrio), he is pursued by both the police (Whoopi Goldberg as a Colombo-style jokester; Lyle Lovett as a taciturn shadow) and his mysterious nemesis, a writer whose calls he didn't return. He becomes entan-

gled in Machiavellian manoeuvres at his studio, set off by the sudden hiring of new phenom Larry Levy (Peter Gallagher) and the puzzling neutrality of his boss, Joel Levinson (Brion James, the wild-eyed replicant of *Blade Runner*). And, crazily, he becomes infatuated with the one woman he should entirely avoid: Kahane's ice-princess old girlfriend, June Gudmundsdotter (Greta Scacchi). Griffin isn't the Hitchcockian 'wrong man'; he's the *right* man, or maybe Fortune's Fool. But though he never intended a murder, as the film wears on he gets guiltier and guiltier of more and more – until, finally, the most normal studio executive sins, such as greenlighting bad movies and betraying friends, are almost the least of his crimes.

Here, the 'normal paranoia' of big studio dealings is magnified by injecting the player into his own fantasy: into the same kind of glitzy sex thriller he might buy for the studio. *The Player* is deliberately compared, in its own dialogue, to *Fatal Attraction*, the ultimate studio-compromised thriller, with the ultimate market research happy ending – but when they spring a similar switcheroo on us, Altman and Tolkin let us know that the fix is in that, for them, art is imitating life and art. They make their 'real' and fantasy happy endings echo each other. It's part of an orgy of reflexive references: posters and name cards linking Griffin M. to Peter Lorre's (and David Wayne's) M; a photograph of Hitchcock brooding with avuncular placidity over one suspense sequence; constant chatter about movies, constant buzz about stars.

Almost everything is movie-referential: the shots, the dialogue, the settings, the dense collection of sixty-five or so stars or film-makers playing themselves. (Another dozen or so – including *The Player*'s producer David Brown, Charles Burnett and Seymour Cassell – were lost when a scene at the Columbia Bar and ►



ROBERT ALTMAN AND 'THE PLAYER' LAUGHING AND KILLING

The wrong man: Tim Robbin
as Griffin Mill, the executive
haunted by death threats
and studio power politics
Opposite: Greta Scacchi,
the only character who
cares nothing for the movies



Robert Altman talks with Peter Keogh about stars, business, politics, death and happy endings – and 'The Player'

Death and Hollywood

Robert Altman: I hadn't heard of this project until 1 March a year ago.

I hadn't read or heard of the book; it was just presented to me by my agent, who said there's a script out there you might like and they're looking for a director. I read it and said, I would do this if the circumstances were right.

Peter Keogh: Didn't you think it was perfect for you?

It was good casting to put me in it. We thought we'd get a certain amount of tension from the film, that it wouldn't just be ignored, mainly because of my presence. But we've had a great response to it; I've never seen anything quite like it.

Were the stars a help?

That was one of my primary ideas. I said, if we do this, let's see if we can't do what I did in *Tanner '88*, the television series about the man who ran for president, where we mixed real people with our fictional characters. It seems to me that it would be very difficult to do a film in Hollywood about the movie business and not see any movie people walking around or sitting in restaurants. And we always had the mandate to use actors for the *Habeas Corpus* film and the dailies.

It was easy to get people to do it: I just called them up and asked them. I gave them a capsule of the script and said, it has a happy ending: it's about a studio executive who murders a writer and gets away with it. And they all laughed and said count me in.

But I think the reason those people did that so graciously was that they wanted to stand up and be counted. They wanted to join the protest. And the protest is against the greed factor. I'm getting mail from people who work in museums, who say, my God, this is the museum system, or this is

the magazine business, this is the way my goddamn editors are. So if I'm correct in that, we should do big business outside. For the Hollywood people, it's just a home movie: oh look, there's so and so. It's good for gossip: who is Griffin Mill really supposed to be? For me, he isn't supposed to be anybody.

I don't know these players any more, they're all too young, they were on tricycles when I was in Hollywood last. I can't remember their names or connect them to the faces. And by the time I do remember their names, they'll be gone.

Has Hollywood really changed so much? Surely since the 20s it's always been a place of greed?

Yes, but they used the artists. They knew they had to have the artists to make the product they were selling. No matter how much they bullied them or how greedy they got, they were still making movies. As bad as those guys were, they'd go on hunches. Hunches are probably using all your senses, conscious and unconscious, and making a decision. Now the hunch is gone, because the room up top is empty. You've got all these players who keep sending projects upstairs, to get a 'no'. When it gets up there what comes back is what was sent up – the data on how well it's going to do.

What we make now are pictures that worked before; they're in the business of making copies. The artists are the ones who have to feed the marketing machine – we have a joke about it in the film when he says, it's pretty interesting to eliminate the writer from the creative process; if we can just get rid of the director and the actors we've got this thing beat.

Do you read your reviews?

It's interesting to find out how people perceive these things – there are always other points of view. And there's timing. I can do a picture that I think is terrific and somebody doesn't like it. I think, why don't they like it? And I try to figure out for myself what it is. A lot of times it's simply the timing.

You're not confused about why people like this film?

I don't know exactly why they like it. There are a lot of reasons. I think maybe it's because the timing is right. I fully believe that Hollywood is a metaphor for our culture and our society. I think that the film is a reflection of what's happening in the election: people are tired of and object to people who just take, take, take and don't give back. In other words, when their object is just to make money. That's why this film is being received so well.

You think it's the Jerry Brown of movies? Absolutely.

In a way, though, the film seems your least political and most removed from political reality. It's a self-enclosed, reflexive artifice from the opening tracking shot to the implied circularity of the ending.

To me, it's like a painting; I do a certain subject. But I do think the film is politically oriented; it's a metaphor for politics. I think the audience has so much information now from all the media, so much is talked about Hollywood and how much people make, it's like the basketball and baseball players. Then these guys who run the corporations, the Steve Rosses and the people making \$64 million in salary. It's shocking to people. And I don't see these people putting it back in.

Much of the pleasure, though, is in the film's play with form, artifice and illusion.

It's exactly the same thing. This picture is very much like *M*A*S*H* in its content too – in terms of what the general buzz is in our society.

In style and form?

It's the same ending as *M*A*S*H* – that's where we got the ending from.

You've always resisted happy endings in your films, or at least an ending that ties things up neatly. Isn't *The Player* an exception to this in its closure?

It's structure is like a snail; it turns back into itself just like a fantail shrimp; it reflects itself. Now I can really see what the structure is, I can almost parse it. I'm sure that for the next film I do, I'll keep some of these things in mind. What I learned

is now filtered in with my own lore and consequently the next film will be changed.

Is there any character in this film that you identify with?

No, not really, though I see pieces of myself in all the characters. I can understand what their motivation is and what they think about themselves.

One scene in *The Player* expresses the film's implicit voyeurism – when Tim Robbins is talking to Greta Scacchi while peering through her window.

That's why the scene was done that way. The June Gudmundsdotter character is the one I had the most difficulty with in the script. I decided we shouldn't introduce her until very late: we're trying to set up a point of passion with her. So their first conversation is over the telephone. In the conversation, I indicate that Griffin is starting to flirt with her and they kind of connect. But how to do that? Then I realised that if I show him watching her and she doesn't know she's being observed, he can create a fantasy about her. That's the way we get interested in people. And I was always playing with the primal idea that when a guy goes in and kills another man, he takes the woman: the guy goes in and rapes the town and kills the soldier and takes the woman. So I was trying to use that. And to justify what Griffin does. So I felt that to make this woman so interesting to him, I'd let him create her. I took the position that June Gudmundsdotter too doesn't exist; she could be anybody, but he sees her in a certain way that fascinates him because of what she offers him, because she's not part of his world.

I think for the guy she's living with, she's the perfect woman. You go your own way, you don't see her much, you don't have to take her to the movies with you. I assume she cooks for him, she sits there, she sleeps with him, but she doesn't bother him.

It seems that Kahane was offering her to Griffin. Michael Tolkin said that the Greta Scacchi character was one of your areas of disagreement.

◀ Grill was cut.) It's a movie about movies, and a movie about making (or unmaking) movies – and, in addition, it's a movie-as-movie. A picture actually does get made during the course of *The Player*: the ridiculous, socially conscious thriller *Habeas Corpus*, which we hear being pitched, sold, and later watch in a screening room. (It's been atrociously compromised – à la *Fatal Attraction* – and everyone but one malcontent loves it.) The film's Pirandellian opening and close – both of which are pure Altman and were dreamed up during the last stages of the script re-writes – are sublimely humorous, yet they're also scary. Far more than Tolkin's novel, the movie is a tale where darkness triumphs – in blazing sunshine.

Critics tend to prefer Altman's big ensemble shows (*M*A*S*H*; *McCabe and Mrs Miller*) to his dreamy, *persona*-influenced chamber pieces (*Images*; *3 Women*) – his Hawks mode rather than his Bergman – and though *The Player* is a bit of

both, the wacky plenitude of its community is probably what spurred comparisons to *Nashville*. (Better cross-references are *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* or *The Long Goodbye*). Yet there is a certain *Nashvillian* richness here: in character, in milieu, even in technique. Altman uses many styles for his movie-movie: Hitchcockian cutting for the suspense sequences; a besotted, hallucinatory mood for the love scenes; an *Entertainment Tonight* parody with actual narration by hostess Leeza Gibbons; even a mock modern car chase sequence with a rattlesnake in a landrover.

But primarily, the style is the one that Altman has developed through his 80s 'exile', with his two French-Canadian cinematographers, Pierre Mignot and Jean Lépine: quasi-documentary, loose, easy, opportunistic – Altman's trademark camera tools, the zoom lens and floating jib arm, helping to create a dreamy, floaty 'eye' that roams and penetrates everywhere. It fits:

this is the movie which tells us how and why other movies get made, why so many of them are so depressingly bad and empty. It's the quintessential backstage film about the 'Age of the Deal' – about the shift from movies as an industry and Hollywood as a dream factory, to movies as a business and Hollywood as a marketplace.

"This is a film, in a funny way, I was born to make".

Robert Altman

After the great mid-70s box office juggernaut of *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, there was a sea change in American movie-making, and many of the more eccentric, visionary – or simply troublesome – American film-makers were pushed to the margins or forced to adapt. Some adjusted (Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese); some faltered or stopped altogether (Ashby, Peckinpah, Cassavetes). And some, like Altman, kept busy at the edges (the long-shelved *O.C. and Stiggs* remains his only studio movie since *Popeye*).

It was. You see, he wrote the book, and the character he had in the book made sense, but to me, she was too ordinary. I felt that we should make her a movie character. I tried to explain it to Greta; you're not a real person, you're acting in a movie, you don't have to find out the truth in this woman because there isn't any truth, she doesn't really exist. So you have to find what it is that becomes intriguing to this guy. Is it her philosophy, what she says, her vulnerability and openness? He hasn't seen anything like this, everything in his world has reason.

To this day, I don't know what it is I feel about her, but I was very insistent when I set it up this way. *Is she like a blank movie screen on which you can project your desires?* Absolutely. That's the way I felt about it. I know Tolkin had it differently, but ... (shrugs).

It seems that with her, Griffin might even be redeemed.

He's about to be redeemable. He has a compulsion to confess to her; he feels guilt about this thing. He's not a murderer, he's a manslaughterer. If he hadn't seen her when he talked to her, I wonder if he would have gone so far as to kill the guy? Maybe her presence brought out a primal thing in him? *Which ending do you prefer to 'Habeas Corpus'? I would think the Julia Roberts/Bruce Willis version, because it disrupts the verisimilitude and reminds us that it's a movie.*

If I was going to make that picture, which I wouldn't, she would have died in the gas chamber and he would have got there too late. Which was the way the author pitched it. That would have been my kind of movie. But that picture doesn't sell any tickets and this picture probably would. It's a sort of *Fatal Attraction*.

There seems to be a motif of ritual murder or sacrificial death in your movies, as well as in Tolkin's.

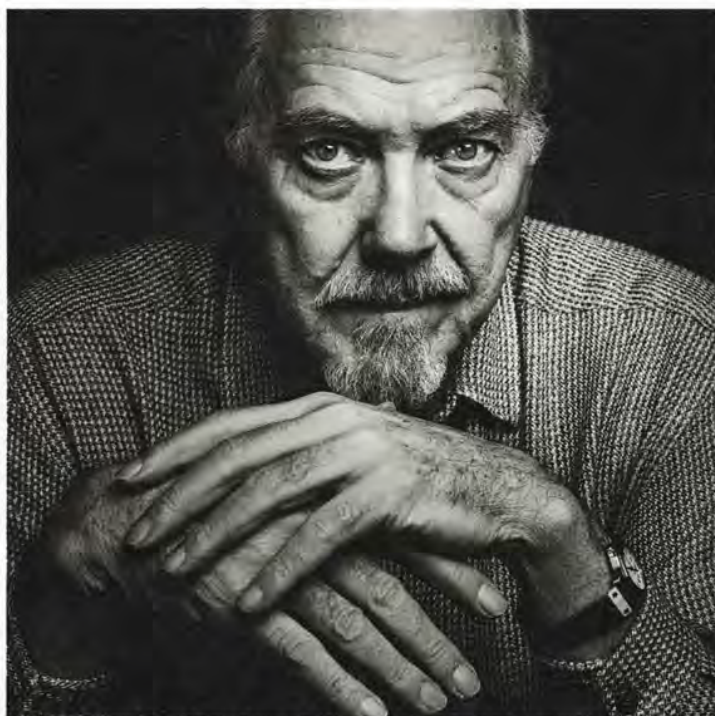
What other films is that in?

Let's see...

McCabe and Mrs Miller.

Vincent & Theo.

Well, yeah. See, death is the only



Robert Altman: "I see pieces of myself in all the characters... I understand their motivation"

ending I know. A movie doesn't end; it has a stopping place. That story, those people don't die then: they live on and have terrible lives if it's a happy ending, or if it's a sad ending, they may survive it and recover and have happy lives. So death is the only ending and I deal with death as an ending. The people I have die are usually the wrong people, the ones you don't expect to die. That's the way it seems when people die – when friends of mine die, it's not the person I expect, it's always somebody I didn't expect. So that's another little truth thing I feel, and I feel compelled to use those kinds of things.

In your films, the gifted individual is invariably crushed by the system. Do you feel that's inevitable?

I don't know. I don't feel there's any justice in death, in who dies and who doesn't. And I'm not sure who's better off – the person who dies, or the person who doesn't. If you say happy ending, let's talk about *The Player*. If

you're following Bonnie Sherow in *The Player*, it's not really a happy ending; if you follow Griffin Mill, it is. But if you think about it, it's not really a happy ending because this guy has lost his soul; he's become nothing. And with her, this could be a happy ending: even though she's sad right now, she's out of this fucking mess and maybe she'll find some expression in life that will give her more happiness.

There seems a pattern in your films of women being humiliated, as with Bonnie in this movie.

Well, she got that way because she was trying to support something she thought was right. And she was defeated by it.

*Other examples are 'Nashville' and 'M*A*S*H'... Feminists have given you a hard time about this before.*

I think I've supported the feminists. I'm not showing you the way I think things should be, but the way things are. That is the way women are treated. I got a lot of flack after

*M*A*S*H* in 1970; they said, oh, it's terrible the way you treat... I say, it isn't the way that I treat women, that's the way I see them treated. So I'm making your point for you.

In the past decade you've been doing a lot of theatre and opera.

Well, not a lot. We've been working on *McTeague* for four years now. It'll be on in October.

One more question; it's an essay question.

In 1970 *M*A*S*H* initiated a renaissance in American film, which ended in 1980 with such debacles as *Popeye* and *Heaven's Gate*. Do you think this film might accomplish the same thing as *M*A*S*H* did two decades ago?

I think you'll see it switch back;

I think the times are going to demand it. These people doing copies are going to go broke and be fired and somebody else will come in. And maybe somebody else will say, hey, wait a minute, what they're doing is wrong. Maybe we've got to go back to the artists again.

So do you have a bunch of films ready for this renaissance?

Yes. I hope I'm around. I hope it happens real quick.

Do you have a new project in the works?

I don't have a film financed, though I've been trying to do a Raymond Carver project.

Which story?

Nine of them. I put them together with a couple of stories of my own connecting them, a tissue, like *Nashville*. It's nine stories that criss-cross back and forth. It's viewed as having too many people in it – I've got a terrific cast. They also say that the story is too depressing and I say, well, this is a comedy. They say, you mean, the kid dies and that's funny? No, it's not funny, but it's a comedy. It's like the blues: the blues don't inflict pain, they relieve it, yet they do discuss it. Any one of those Carver stories done as a full-length movie could make you go off and shoot yourself, but when they overlap... They don't have anything to compare it to; they have no way to market research it. So they won't do it. But I will get it done. I just have to find the right guy.

Altman has made masterpieces throughout his career: his 'official' ones, *M*A*S*H*, *McCabe and Mrs Miller* and *Nashville*, in the 1970-75 years (plus, I would add, *The Long Goodbye*); then *3 Women*, *A Wedding* and *A Perfect Couple* in the late 70s (the years of his alleged 'decline'); then *Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Secret Honor* and *Tanner '88* during the 80s. So it seems almost churlish to complain that he hasn't been making movies in the system lately. Forget career problems and studio enemies: what movies were there for him to make? (Should he, like Arthur Penn, have settled for *Penn and Teller Get Killed*?)

Altman became, in a way, a different director in the 80s. The one-time deconstructor of scripts and master improviser, he began to stick to the letter of his dramas (by Herman Wouk as well as Harold Pinter, Ed Graczyk as well as Sam Shepard). The one-time master juggler of large casts, he played with smaller ones – using, in

Secret Honor, a single actor, Philip Baker Hall as Richard Nixon.

Altman doesn't write off his 80s; nor should we. He calls the Garry Trudeau-scripted HBO political satire, *Tanner '88*, the best work of his career. But just as his early 70s work showed a master iconoclast colliding with one icon after another – and the late 70s films, probably his most personal, were a successive unveiling of obsessions and political feelings – the 80s films were, increasingly, exercises in craft, statements of alienation, artful collaborations.

In the 80s Altman's visual style became his main signature; often he refrained from 'creating the moment' with his actors and instead respected his texts. In *The Player* he does both. Dense, funny, a portrait of moral malaise and high-tech cruelty that hits its marks perfectly, *The Player* is grandly Altmanesque, coolly Tolinesque and cleverly objective as well. Within its limits, mostly budgetary (it cost a relatively

lean \$8 million), this consummate movie-movie shows both sides of the mirror: the game, the score, all the stage as a world, and all its players as merely men and women.

"In the old days, we celebrated the making of a movie.

These days, they have a party to celebrate the making of the deal". Billy Wilder

In *The Player*'s ingenious credits sequence, that nine minute moving crane shot conceived as playful homage to *Touch of Evil*, which swoops us all around the studio and introduces us to most of the players, the film's self-referentiality immediately becomes a shared joke with the audience. As the credits roll, and two characters appear and re-appear to discuss famous tracking shots, we peek periodically into the bungalow of story executive Griffin Mill. There, Buck Henry pitches *The Graduate 2*; Joan Tewkesbury and Patricia Resnick pitch something they describe as *Out of Africa* meets *Pretty Woman*; Alan Rudolph (who is mistaken for Martin ►

◀ Scorsese and complimented on *Cape Fear*) pitches *Ghost* meets *The Manchurian Candidate* – while Adam Simon runs around desperately trying to interest passers-by in some New Age science fiction.

Altman's serene jokiness barely cushions his movie's mordant side: the wry, unhurried descent into this world of smooth chicanery, heartless numbers-crunching, the rolling break-even and soulless bottom-lining. It's a strange, clubby little milieu, so enclosed it's almost mundane; which may bother viewers who want the beautiful more than the bad. Yet *The Player's* look and feel are exactly right: this circle of bare, utilitarian offices, unobtrusively elegant restaurants (The St James Club, Geoffrey's in Malibu), out-of-the-way Desert Hot Springs spas. Studio executives really talk like this; studio offices really look like this. Only the movie posters on the walls – predominantly low-budget thrillers of the pre-60s era and probably a reflection of *The Player's* own modest budget – are anachronistic.

Everything has a casual, effortless air, especially the star community swirling around us. The famous faces are picked up without fanfare, to the frame's right and left, foreground or background. John Cusack and Anjelica Huston walk over from another table. Jack Lemmon tinkles Gershwin at a party, while Harry Belafonte beams and Rod Steiger hides in a corner. Cher, Nick Nolte, Gary Busey and Teri Garr cruise through a party on the Los Angeles County Museum of Art patio; we turn another corner at another party, and there's Jeff Goldblum... After a while, the presence of the stars begins to seem meaningless and everyday: a few jokes, some greetings, small talk, badinage. They're the currency of this little world – the names 'Bruce Willis' and 'Julia Roberts' are chanted like 'Open Sesames' during the multiple opening pitch, before they show up as the leads of *Habeas Corpus* – but they're also treated like pieces on a game board.

The pitches are the core of the story; the philosophy of pitching permeates everything. People pitch for sex, for jobs. The police pitch for witnesses and suspects, and one funeral elegy for the murdered writer, David Kahane, sounds suspiciously like a pitch for glory. *The Player* is about post-sound-bite America: a world where millions of dollars are moved around, lives are wrecked, promoted or lost on the basis of one-page summaries or cellular phone dialogues.

It's the kingdom of the post-jaws movie era. Advertising has swallowed up the movies (along with the rest of the media, and, most disastrously, American politics); movies are generated by big-star deals or marketing hooks (euphemistically called "high concepts"); the end result of the entire process, in a way, is not the film itself but the trailer. (Indeed, some of the era's movies – *Rocky 4*, *Rambo 3*, *Kindergarten Cop* – years ago began to look like elongated versions of their own trailers.) In this corporate Oz, which *The Player* evokes with dazzling wit and sadness, art and personal expression are heresies or self-indulgences. (The cinema is 'dominant' – but the fuel is greed, not ideology.) Go ahead: pitch me *Citizen Kane*. Pitch me *Ivan the Terrible*, *8½*, or *Tokyo Story*. Pitch me, for that mat-



Spot the stars: Peter Falk and Susan Sarandon, just two of the stars who float through Altman's savage view of Hollywood, Inc

ter, *Vertigo*, *The Searchers* or *Casablanca*. Pitch me *Rules of the Game*. (Would you rather pitch *Terminator 2*? Now, you're a player...)

The happy ending that conceals a multitude of sins: that's what *The Player* – right in synch with the new cynicism – is all about. If the most powerful recent American president was a movie star who seemed lost without his teleprompter (and sometimes with it) and the vast majority of American politicians owe their offices to multi-million dollar television campaigns – how can we say that *The Player* is only about Hollywood? (How were S. & L. deregulation or the Persian Gulf War pitched?) Altman and Tolkin know that the practices they describe aren't organic to the movie business: they're organic to business, period. They represent the invasion of new-style management into movies, a hostile takeover.

In *The Player*, it's the system that's evil. Like *Quintet*, it's a film about people trapped in a game, obscure, impenetrable, a wall map of Hollywood power in concentric circles. At the centre, seemingly, are the executives; beyond them are the writers and directors whose projects are available; beyond them are the actors (*The Player's* huge cameo cast) waiting for the decisions; beyond them are ordinary people, waiting to see the movies. And though the players may be vaguely contemptuous of movies, even ignorant of their larger history, they're surrounded by them, swimming in them. They're living in a movie, which will be pitched and greenlighted moments before the final credits. Everyone is obsessed with films – even Lt Whoopi Goldberg fondles an Oscar and her fellow cops critique *Freaky* at the Pasadena police station – everyone, except for Griffin's prey and his victim's coolly composed lover, June Gudmundsdotter, who never watches movies or reads books, and perhaps inevitably becomes the only character in *The Player* to be glamorised like a movie star.

Griffin may babble about art at the gala soirée on the patio of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, but for him, it's the formula that confers order on the world. At one point, he recites, as a seduction tool, the specific recipe he looks for in projects: "Sex, suspense, nudity, violence, heart, hope and happy endings" – all elements of *The Player*. There is only

one 'idealist' among the movie's major characters: Griffin's first girlfriend, Bonnie Sherow (Cynthia Stevenson). But though she has more dignity in film than book, she's exposed at the end as a bit of a fool, fighting for the integrity of a project that never had any to begin with.

It's a bleak vision, yet *The Player* doesn't expose it combatively. Irony is everywhere, even in the film's indictments of power. We never learn, for example, who calls the shots. A power shuffle is going on: newcomer Larry Levy is being ushered in and Griffin (the studio's major Wasp?) seems on the way out. Later on, we discover that the boss we thought okayed the move, Joel Levinson, was himself its target, shadowy figures above him the real engineers. Who are they? For Altman himself, they're non-existent. "An empty room", he says, smiling, "with a group of empty suits reporting to it."

"If you make a picture for a million dollars, you can't steal a million dollars".

Attributed to an early 70s Hollywood player

The centre of *The Player* is a thriller: that archetypal plot, linked, deliberately, to *Fatal Attraction*. In the foreground is the dilemma of Griffin Mill, who has murdered the wrong man and is being harassed by an anonymous enemy; in the background, doubling his paranoia, is the cut-throat manoeuvring at the studio. Altman and Tolkin expertly twist our sympathies. We're in Griffin's corner at first, because he's in trouble, because, compared to Levy, he initially seems sensible, even idealistic: where Griffin is simply condescending to writers, Levy wants to eliminate them altogether – suggesting that the execs manufacture their own scripts by scouring the *Los Angeles Times* and casting news stories with stars. At the end, when the tone and our sympathies shift completely, it's too late. We're in the grip of the automatic happy ending, which Griffin negotiates as an unshakeable precondition of his deal.

The Player's murder occurs right after both murderer and victim watch – at the same theatre (Pasadena's Rialto) – that quintessential humanist document on poverty and the need for social unity, Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1948). And though both men say they love it, they wind up in a brutal clinch in the darkened parking lot – in an argument over money and status (and "meaningful pictures"). *Ladri di bici-*

clette is not evoked with total irony. Michael Tolkien loves post-war Italian cinema – *La Dolce Vita* is his favourite movie and he's also very fond of the Dino Risi-Ettore Scola *Il Sorpasso* – but here, he and Altman suggest that even the greatest films no longer have any real imaginative hold on the people who make the new ones. In this film, all the players and their petitioners know that movies like *The Bicycle Thief* no longer have a place in the picture – though Griffin offers, insincerely, to greenlight a modern remake (“We’ll keep it pure”) and to hire his eventual victim as the writer.

Tolkien’s novel purposely takes the perspective of a studio executive rather than an unproduced writer (which he was when he wrote it) to avoid the cliché of the sensitive artist brutalised; to show the ‘artist’ as part of the system, eager to join its corruption and benefits. And when Altman came on the project – after a number of big name directors, including Sidney Lumet and Hill, turned it down – he put his stamp on it by turning *The Player*’s community into the Hollywood community itself. The cameo players whom Altman coaxed into the film – to augment a main cast of Robbins, Scacchi, Ward, James, Gallagher, Stevenson, D’Onofrio, Goldberg, Fred Ward (the long-take-loving studio cop), Dina Merrill (Griffin’s secretary), Richard Grant (the *Habeas Corpus* pitcher), Dean Stockwell (his producer) and Sydney Pollack (Griffin’s lawyer) – obviously all took on the project out of a mixture of larking, respect

for Altman and the desire to join in a humorous bashing of Hollywood. Their presence validates the movie’s maverick insights.

The core of any Altman film – the core of his whole method – is the acting. (Like Renoir, he will sacrifice everything to performance.) Once again, his major actors all hit giddy heights: Grant’s brilliantly daffy pitch for *Habeas Corpus*, Goldberg’s insinuatingly sexy cross-examinations, and most of all, Robbins’ murderously vacant self-control, his portrait of a man decomposing in his own shadow, his own suit, his own car phone. All of them, and the cameo stars as well, help push *The Player* towards savagery. It was Burt Reynolds who decided to describe Griffin Mill to critic Charles Champlin as “an asshole”, Malcolm McDowell who decided to blast Griffin to his face as hypocrite and backstabber and Buck Henry who dreamed up the pitch for *The Graduate 2*. (Ben and Elaine are married, Mrs Robinson, paralysed, lives with them, and their daughter – the post-graduate – is about to leave for school.)

Nathanael West’s *Day of the Locust* had this kind of savagery (Schlesinger’s movie diluted it) and malice at this pitch might have pleased Ben Hecht. Indeed, there’s something close to *The Player*’s humour in part two of Hecht’s neglected 1952 *Actors and Sin*: where smarmy agent Eddie Albert peddles an atrocious scenario to an addle-brained studio head only to discover that the author is a nine-year-old child (played by Hecht’s sullen-looking daughter,

Jenny). Jenny Hecht’s demented script ideas – with their outlandish clichés, heaving sex, and insanely multiplied killings – sound like pitches that today’s ‘high concept’ hunters – though not Griffin Mill – might snap up.

It’s Hollywood’s validation of *The Player* that is perhaps the darkest of all the movie’s jokes. This hilarious, cold-eyed, unsparing film – which compares studio executives to killers, shows inane movies being made because of executive gamesmanship, and ridiculous writers and directors as willing chattels and voracious would-be whores – was the unqualified hit of the Hollywood screening room circuits before its release, admired particularly (as a film, not necessarily as an investment) by virtually every executive, producer and studio head who saw it. (The major exception: Columbia’s Mark Canton, one of the butts of Julie Salamon’s *Bonfire of the Vanities* exposé, *The Devil’s Candy*, who, reportedly, is convinced that Griffin Mill is modelled on him – something denied by Altman, Tolkien and Robbins.)

That *The Player* may be Hollywood’s favourite movie this year says something about the industry’s self-image – something about a certain uneasiness towards the legacy and practices of the boom-and-bust 80s – and maybe something about the unshakeable egotism of the powerful.

“Brains, hell. I know lots of brainy guys can’t make a picture around the block...” Robert Rossen
‘The Player’ opens in the UK at the end of June.

Filmography

Robert Altman

born 20 February 1925
 Kansas City, Missouri

The Calvin Industrial Films (1949-55);

at least sixty industrial films were made by Altman at Calvin Industrials

The Delinquents (1956) 75 mins (and p/sc)

The James Dean Story (1957) 82 mins
 (co-dir and co-p/co-ed)

Countdown (1967) 101 mins

That Cold Day in the Park (1969) 115 mins

M*A*S*H (1970) 116 mins

“The real conscious point that we took in ‘M*A*S*H’ was that if we had to go in for a close-up or underline a joke or a joke depended on a line reading or a word, we threw it out. That was the whole idea of having more going on outside the frame than was inside the frame. The beauty of making ‘M*A*S*H’ lay in the fact that nobody really knew what I was doing”.

Brewster McCloud (1970) 105 mins (and p)

McCabe and Mrs Miller (1971) 121 mins
 (and co-sc)

Images (1972) 101 mins (and p/sc)

“In French the title ‘Images’ indicates a lot of fast cutting. People will really be surprised at how conservative, how old-fashioned, this picture is. It’s done very classically on purpose, because what we are dealing with is non-reality, fantasy”.

The Long Goodbye (1973) 111 mins

Thieves Like Us (1974) 123 mins
 (and co-sc)

California Split (1974) 109 mins (and co-p)

Nashville (1975) 161 mins (and p)

“We used a lot of people. In ‘Nashville’ more than any other film, what we did was set up events and then press the button and photograph them, pretty much like you would a documentary”.

Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting

Bull’s History Lesson (1976) 123 mins
 (and p/co-sc)

“What we were trying to show in that film was that Buffalo Bill was a fake. It didn’t do too well at the box office. It came out in the Bicentennial year; Nixon had just crept away, and at that time nobody in America wanted to have fun made of their legendary heroes. I guess people think you’re shooting at them in some way when really what you’re trying to do is to tell them that we don’t have to be fooled by these people”.

3 Women (1977) 123 mins (and p/sc)

A Wedding (1978) 125 mins (and p/co-sc)

Quintet (1979) 118 mins (and p/co-sc)

A Perfect Couple (1979) 112 mins

(and p/co-sc)

Health (1979) 102 mins (and p/co-sc)

“‘A Wedding’ and ‘Health’ I wanted to do in the theatre. I wrote them both as theatre pieces, but it’s impossible to get that many people on stage for any length of time. And people say ‘Oh, you’re doing all these theatre things. Why don’t you do things like ‘A Wedding’ and ‘Health’? Well they were theatre pieces. It’s just that you didn’t have the knowledge that they were”.

Popeye (1980) 114 mins

In 1981 Altman sold his Lion’s Gate studio in Los Angeles and moved to New York to form Sandcastle 5 productions, and undertake a series of projects which were an amalgam of theatre, television and film.

Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean (1982) 110 mins

Two by South (includes **Rattlesnake in a Cooler** and **Precious Blood**) (1982) running time not known (and p)

Streamers (1983) 118 mins (and p)

“I use improvisation as a rehearsal tool. We rehearsed constantly, but not the whole play – just sections at a time. I don’t show



Buffalo Bill and the Indians (1976)

things as they should be, but as they are. My art is to show the situation as it appears to me, not as propaganda for that situation”.

Secret Honor (1984) 90 mins (and p)

The Laundromat (1985) running time not known

O.C. and Stiggs (1985) 109 mins (and p)

Fool for Love (1985) 108 mins

“With ‘Fool for Love’, we never had a screenplay, which was a problem with the other companies that were going to do it. I didn’t have a screenplay on ‘Jimmy Dean’ or ‘Streamers’ or ‘Secret Honor’. I said: ‘I’m not going to write anything and Sam Shepard’s not going to write anything. Here’s what I plan to do...’ Then Cannon came along and said: ‘We’ll do it if we can produce it and watch the money that you spend’”.

Beyond Therapy (1986) 93 mins

(and co-sc)

The Dumb Waiter (1987) 60 mins (and p)

The Room (1987) 60 mins (and p)

Aria ‘Segment 6’ (1987) 89 mins (co-d)

The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial (1988)

120 mins

Tanner ‘88 (1988) 10 episodes, 30 mins

Vincent & Theo (1990) 140 mins

The Player (1992) 123 mins

Short films

The Party (1964) running time not known

Pot au feu (1966) 9 mins

The Life of Kathryn Reed (1966) 11 mins

Television series

Altman has contributed to a number of television series, directing one or several episodes of the following:

Pulse of the City (1953-54)

Alfred Hitchcock Presents (1957-58)

The Whirlybirds (1957-58)

U.S. Marshall aka Sheriff of Cochise (1957-58)

Oh! Susannah aka The Gale Storm Show (1959)

The Millionaire (1958-59)

The Troubleshooters (1959)

The Detectives (1959-62)

Sugarfoot/Bronco Hour (1959-60)

Hawaiian Eye (1959)

Maverick (1960)

The Roaring Twenties (1960-61)

Surfside Six (1960-61)

Bonanza (1960-61)

M Squad (1961)

Route 66 (1961)

Peter Gunn (1961)

Bus Stop (1961)

The Gallant Men (1962)

Combat (1962-63)

Kraft Mystery Theatre (1962-63)

Kraft Suspense Theatre (1963-64)

The Long Hot Summer (1965)

Chicago, Chicago aka Night Watch (1966)

Films as producer only

Welcome to L.A. (1977)

The Late Show (1977)

Remember My Name (1978)

Rich Kids (1979)

WRITERS TALK



NOEL PARRY/KATZ

Lem Dobbs, who co-wrote 'The Hard Way' and wrote 'Kafka', Steven Soderbergh's new feature, which opens in Britain later this year, asked three other Hollywood writers to talk with him about film and television



I'm Lem Dobbs, I'm sitting here in Malibu, where all screenwriters end up if they work really hard. I'm sitting with Michael Leeson, who has written such films as Danny DeVito's *The War of the Roses* and Michael Ritchie's *The Survivors*; Dan Pyne, who has written John Schlesinger's *Pacific Heights*, Michael Caton-Jones' *Doc Hollywood* and the new Roger Donaldson film, *White Sands*; and Mark Rosenthal, who with his partner, Larry Konner, has written such films as Sidney Furie's *Superman IV*, Michael Cimino's *Desperate Hours*, and Lewis Teague's *The Jewel of the Nile*.

Lem Dobbs There's always a lot of talk about the tension between screenwriters and directors. Are all directors the same when they have their directing caps on, regardless of personality? Dan, you've worked with Walter Hill and John Schlesinger, two very different personalities. Yet is your relationship to them as a screenwriter much the same? Are the power politics so firmly in place?

Dan Pyne Walter is a director who recognises good writing and admires it. But for one reason or another, it doesn't always show. Walter talks about putting on the "imperial robe" of directing. He says, "OK, now I have to go out". But when he's working with you one to one, you're just two people talking about a film. With John

Schlesinger it's different. He always has on the imperial robe, but at the same time he always has the attitude of, "I'm not a writer – you're the writer of this film". John would call me continually. He asked endless questions and thought that was his role. If I couldn't answer them, then together we'd come up with an answer. But if I could answer them to his satisfaction he would move on to the other decisions he wanted to make. I had heard horror stories about Brian De Palma, who I'm working with now, but I'm not having any problems. I find that he's open to ideas, to criticism, to all kinds of things. And that's the kind of person I want to work with.

Lem Dobbs To what extent do you agonise between the desire to write what you want to write and the desire to take a job because they're offering you a lot of money? I remember Francis Coppola saying that when he became a successful screenwriter, suddenly people were offering him a lot of money to continue, but he wanted instead to make a small personal film that would put him on the map as a director. His agent said, "well you can do that next year". And Coppola said, quite rightly, that the woods are full of guys who waited until next year, but next year never came. It's like Vegas – you say, "one more throw of the dice and then I'm walking away from this table". But very few people do.

Mark Rosenthal I don't know how Dan feels, but I hardly know any screenwriter who doesn't see it as something through which they are moving – whether it's to producing or directing or being taken more seriously as a writer. I think from the outside, people see it as a profession, but it's pure flux.

Dan Pyne I wonder if that's one of the problems with the general quality? I came to Hollywood because I wanted to learn about the kind of writing that was influencing the most people. In college, I read Dickens and Henry James and all those people who are relevant to writers and academics, but don't seem to be as relevant to our culture any more. So I came here to learn about the place that is shaping us, and what I find is that nobody takes it seriously.

I taught a class at UCLA this winter – a graduate film school class in writing that I had taken myself ten years ago. But the difference was incredible. When I was in school, we were naive and idealistic. We were all trying to write non-Western films with a protagonist who reacts but doesn't act and it ends in some depressing death. And it has no structure. This new generation was completely versed in Hollywood film structure, but the depth was missing. They weren't really writing about

anything. Even when we were writing in a genre, for example, a detective film, it was always an *existential* detective film.

Michael Leeson You have a background in literature and philosophy. Young writers now are a weakened generation because they grew up watching movies, so now they're just recycling movies.

Mark Rosenthal I think that's the great division in the profession. Previously, a screenwriter was a guy writing theatre in New York or who had graduated from Princeton and some old producer found him and brought him out here and he saw himself as a "writer". Whenever I'm asked to speak, I always tell kids, "don't take a film course. Study music, philosophy and art history. And your screenplays will be better". But now there's a college being founded for screenwriting.

Dan Pyne There are scarier things. They're doing television now as serious literature. It's *insane*, when you know how television is created.

Lem Dobbs You guys have one foot deeply entrenched in television. Mark, you don't, but your partner Larry does. Michael, you co-created *The Cosby Show* – so presumably your mortgage is taken care of! Dan, you've had three series on the air, which is an amazing achievement. What keeps you in television, even though you're all now established screenwriters?

Dan Pyne I wasn't established until very recently, so television was my entrée to supporting myself. It was either television or find some university that would pay me to teach writing while I wrote short stories or something. And then I had the good fortune to meet some of those legendary television writers from the late 60s, early 70s – Levinson and Link, Sackheim and Michael Mann, who was doing his foray into television. I got swept up in this desire to create the 'important' television show. Not realising, of course, that maybe that time had passed, or that if it happened it would be an accident. Now I'm trying to get my foot out of it.

Lem Dobbs So you have the traditional disillusionment. Do you think it's a lesser medium than movies, or that there's less potential for it?

Dan Pyne I think it's very different. If you really studied it you could say it's just the filler between the commercials – it's a medium that was created to sell something.

Mark Rosenthal But I have to say that this distinction we are making is 180 degrees from the way the public perceives it. For most people, film and television are all part of the same Hollywood and in some ways people feel closer to television. I've walked the

same path at 1875 Century Park East [TV and Film Office Building] with Sean Connery and Henry Winkler and the reaction to Henry was a thousand times bigger than it was to Sean. When you ask questions about Hollywood there's no distinction made: it's "Do you know Bill Cosby, do you know Sean Connery?"

Dan Pyne But people won't pay \$7 to see Henry Winkler, whereas they will pay \$7 to see Sean Connery.

Lem Dobbs Isn't there more likelihood that what you write for television will be made and you'll be able to see your work produced?

Michael Leeson Sure, because of the needed volume.

Lem Dobbs Michael, you have a story about how *The Cosby Show* dropped into your lap.

Michael Leeson It was between drafts of *The War of the Roses*, I think. Tom Werner and Marcy Carsey were walking down a hall in William Morris Agency and some agent stuck his head out and said, "Hey you guys, want to do something with Bill Cosby?" It was pure greed, actually. It was a lot of money for ten minutes and the agent said we had to have it done in a week and I had a couple of weeks. So we did it.

Lem Dobbs So you just wrote out a sketch for Bill Cosby as a kind of screen test for a new series?

Michael Leeson It was a test to show the potential for the series without spending the money for a full pilot. And for some reason people responded to it in an enormously happy way. I still don't understand it – I mean, I watched it, I thought it was OK, but I didn't think it was what a lot of network guys thought it was. But because they liked it we wrote an additional six minutes and it became the pilot.

Dan Pyne As a screenwriter in television you're respected, but in the way a talented mechanical engineer is respected. They give a lot of lip service to it, but you're not respected as an artist. You're a businessman. You have a skill that fits with what they want. I think that's why television is more compressed – you never see the kind of bad writing you can see in a motion picture, but you will never see *Apocalypse Now*, *GoodFellas* or *Raging Bull*.

Mark Rosenthal But at least as a writer you are involved in the making of television. A studio head will go to their D-girl for input before they'll go to the writer. The notion of a director saying, "Let me call up the guy who made this and see what he thinks about me casting this person" is just not done.

There was a wonderful moment when the Writers Guild first established its screenwriters award. Robert Bolt was getting it and he was introduced by David Puttnam. Puttnam said

that everybody talks about the famous shot in *Lawrence of Arabia* where you go from Peter O'Toole snuffing out the match with his fingers, to the sun. And he picked up the screenplay and said, "I will now read you the screenplay: 'And as Lawrence slowly touches the flame with his fingers it bursts into the sun in the desert'". Not only the dialogue is from the screenwriter, but the conception, the image was from Robert Bolt. But there's no part of the process that allows that to be acknowledged.

Lem Dobbs When you're first writing a script, do you try to put on paper the movie that you see in your head? Or do you already start to compromise and think, "this is going to be read by morons who don't think visually so I'd better put the key plot points in the dialogue"?

Michael Leeson I put them in the narrative part.

Dan Pyne As if you're writing a book? I remember I got a lot of complaints after my first script, *White Sands*, because it took two hours to read because I wrote a lot of description. They were annoyed partly because they want to read it in half an hour and then get down to the beach and partly because nobody knew who I was. But they get educated in the process. I've read scripts by Goldman or Bob Towne and they're descriptive and thick, but people read them because they know that's what they're in for.

Lem Dobbs That's one of the major changes in recent years. When screenplays were written by people who were more like professional writers, they were always 150 pages. If you read a Paul Schrader or a Robert Towne or a Neil Simon or a Larry Gelbart script – even something like *Tootsie*, a comedy – it's 155 pages. But if we were to hand in a draft of 155 pages today, they'd think it's unacceptable. The average length of a screenplay now is more like 110 pages.

Michael Leeson James L. Brooks would turn them in at 170 and that was all dialogue. Wall-to-wall dialogue.

Lem Dobbs Let's talk about the rewriting process, as it's something I don't think people understand. People see a movie that says "written by Daniel Pyne and Lem Dobbs" and I suppose they assume that Dan Pyne and myself sat down and wrote this screenplay together. Let's talk about *The Hard Way*, since it's a good example. So, there's a writer named Michael Kozoll, who wrote a script about a cop and an actor...

Dan Pyne This is a good one, because what it started with was a producer named Bill Sackheim who wanted to do a story about an actor and a technical advisor. He'd written something before with Michael Kozoll, so they got

together and Kozoll wrote this thing. But what Kozoll wrote wasn't what Sackheim saw in his head. So he threw it out. And the studio threw it out. And they hired you.

Lem Dobbs Well, first they called Michael Leeson...

Michael Leeson That's right, and I thought it was a pretty fair idea but I was busy. So when Sackheim said, "Who do you know?", I said your name. Because I thought you should have the delight of working with him at some point in your career.

Lem Dobbs So then I met with Sackheim and we hit it off so I was hired to write this script about a cop and an actor. The next year and a half was really old-style Hollywood screenwriting – sitting in Sackheim's, the producer's, office while he paces back and forth, smoking, saying, "Let's try it this way, no kid, let's try it that way, no maybe the way we had before was better". And the nice part about it was that there was no studio involvement as far as I was concerned – I just worked with Bill Sackheim for a year and got totally burnt out. And then the next step was the step that most of us have gone through, which is that they give the script to someone else. I don't know what the excuse was: "This is a piece of shit, let's see what another writer can do with it", or maybe, "Lem is burnt out, we need a fresh voice".

Mark Rosenthal They also say, "Your deal is up... we only hired him for two passes at it and we don't want to pay him any more".

Lem Dobbs For whatever reason, they get another writer... and in this case it was Dan Pyne. So, how did you step into the breach?

Dan Pyne I'd been working with Bill in television and I wanted to get out. One day he came to me with the script, and I knew you'd been working on it, and I knew he'd been working on it forever because he'd been telling me. After he left you, I'd sit in his office for an hour, listening to him go over the story session: "Do you think that works? Do you think that works?" Which he probably did with everybody during that period.

Universal wanted me to do it because they could get me cheap. They liked the idea, they liked a lot of what was done, and they wanted it fixed. I'd never rewritten a screenplay before, but I'd worked in television so I knew how to do stuff fast. At that time, I wasn't interested in writing comedy, so what I thought I could bring to it was a fresh eye, and maybe some cop stuff. I wanted to understand what you had done, regardless of what Bill was telling me – so I tried to find the thread of your story and what I felt worked and then build on that. And what I wound up doing, probably, was strip-

ping away some of the plot that a year and a half of Bill's mud-slinging had put into it. I had enough experience with him to know that he had a tendency to beat you into submission with all these ideas – good ideas – until you're overwhelmed.

Lem Dobbs It was an unbelievably dense draft that you were handed and I wouldn't envy anybody trying to make head or tail of it.

Dan Pyne And it was big – for my taste, too big. It was more the tone of the movie that was fine, so I did a lot more deadpan stuff and simplified it. And I went through two and a half years and two directors.

Lem Dobbs Did you work with Arthur Hiller when he was going to direct it?

Dan Pyne Yes. Arthur nearly did it, but they couldn't find the guys to play the cop and the actor. And then Arthur went off to do *See No Evil, Hear No Evil*. He finally got tired of Universal and Universal was going through a management change at that time, so it got caught in the cracks. And then John Badham read it and he wanted to do it with Michael Fox. And I kept doing drafts, simplifying it, revising it.

Michael Leeson Were you the last writer on the project?

Dan Pyne No. When they finally green-lighted the movie and they're waiting for Michael Fox, John Badham reads the script again and he starts making decisions. It's the movie that he signed on to make, that James Woods signed on to make, that everybody is signed on to make, but now they all have these ideas. And now I'm burnt out too. So I took one more pass at it to try to give John what he wanted and then he brought in another team.

Lem Dobbs Jeff Reno & Ron Osborne.

Dan Pyne Reno & Osborne were brought in to punch it up. To make it funnier. And they did one draft in the month before they shot it, and then it was made. I would say of the final dialogue, 20 per cent is mine.

Lem Dobbs I don't imagine there's a single line of dialogue that I wrote. Maybe along thematic lines, some of the scenes...

Dan Pyne Structurally, it's still the movie that you wrote and that I rewrote.

Lem Dobbs I sometimes think that because I wrote all kinds of different scripts in my early years, it's hard for people. I think they want to perceive writers in a certain category.

Michael Leeson Sure, it makes it easier. It's like looking in the Yellow Pages. But I think it also depends on what you did that made them some money.

Dan Pyne I had an interesting experience with Disney. They wanted to work with me because of the rewrite I did of *The Hard Way*. And they kept giving me projects that for one reason or another,

I didn't think were right. And then I'd read or hear who they'd hired, and I'd say, "If you wanted me to do this project, why are you hiring these guys? They're completely different writers". And the studio's attitude was sort of, "You'll write whatever we want you to write". So my goal has been to generate a personality of some kind so they at least know what they're going to get.

Mark Rosenthal In the case of Disney, it's as if the studio thinks it's the auteur.

Michael Leeson The executives have become the prime movers.

Lem Dobbs That's true of all studios – the age of the superstar director is over. I think that's bad for us; it's one of the reasons movies aren't good any more. Directors aren't as powerful or as famous – don't you find a lot of them are sad?

Dan Pyne They're not happy. Walter Hill will hate that I say this, but I don't think he's happy at all. I don't think he's making the kinds of movies he wants to make; that he cares about. I don't think John Schlesinger is happy with the state of affairs either, though I think he's still trying to make good movies.

Lem Dobbs I wrote *Kafka* ten years ago, and all it takes is a guy named Steve Soderbergh who becomes hot and says he wants to do it next, and it happens immediately. And you wonder, what the hell am I doing wasting my time developing scripts for years that never happen, when this is how it can be?

Dan Pyne Well, that's why it's not called "a film by Lem Dobbs". Though it sounds as if on that film you were part of the process.

Lem Dobbs I was part of the process all the way, until he got on the set with the actors, and then I think a movie becomes like a steamroller running downhill. I think Steven went to the set on the first day with a script that he was happy with and expected to film. But the minute you get actors who have problems and are intimidating or charming or whatever, it becomes a different matter.

But enough. That should be enough to cobble together a few pages.

Mark Rosenthal Watch, it'll come out and it'll be mostly about the location in Malibu. What a business.

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With the release of 'The Adjuster', cult director Atom Egoyan confirms that no other film-maker explores so intensely the relationship of home movies and pornography, argues Amy Taubin

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

● The protagonist of *The Adjuster*, Atom Egoyan's discomforting fourth feature, is named Noah Render. "The allusions are so obvious, they're hysterical", says Egoyan during an interview. "What satisfaction could there be in analysing such a name?", he scoffs. "So what if you realise that the motel where Noah boards his clients is like his ark?" Without pausing for breath, he does an about face and gleefully runs through dictionary definitions of the word 'render': "to represent, to break down into simple forms... What I like about 'render' is that it has so many contrary meanings".

Or, as he remarked on another occasion: "If I have a set of concerns and a set of conflicting attitudes, then I have a film. I don't subscribe to a Messianic view of film-making and I don't disguise the fact that I haven't reached a conclusion. I encourage the audience to be aware that I am photographing people and to be deeply suspicious of my reasons for doing so".

With its wide-screen format, velvety lighting, and speaker-taxing, low-frequency musical effects, *The Adjuster* (1991) is more sumptuous than Egoyan's earlier features, *Next of Kin* (1984), *Family Viewing* (1987) and *Speaking Parts* (1989). Nevertheless, all four films probe the same dilemma – the relationship between so-called family values and a sexual desire which is defined as either incestuous or promiscuous (in other words, as guilty). Always reflexive, the films are littered with references to home movies and pornography; often they're one and the same. Egoyan is as attracted to hardcore as his fellow-Canadian David Cronenberg is to horror. But unlike Cronenberg's films, which pay off in genre terms, Egoyan's evade

the 'money-shot'. Here, it's the scene of pornography, rather than the mechanics of the body, that's delivered.

Like their director/writer, whose characteristic nervous gesture is to wrap the five fingers of his right hand around the middle fingers of his left and hang on for dear life, Egoyan's films fling their Oedipal castration anxiety in our faces. It's what makes this otherwise chilly work both touching and terrifying.

"On New Year's Eve, 1989, my parents' house was devastated by a fire", Egoyan explains. "We worked with an insurance adjuster and I was struck by the power he had over the rematerialisation of our lives. He had to assign value to objects and decide what our standard of living was. He was very professional, an ordinary guy, but I began to think what if he was going through a bad period and he didn't know how to evaluate his own life. *The Adjuster* came out of that experience".

The Adjuster's Noah Render (Elias Koteas) is a compassion junkie; he wants to be indispensable to his clients. He arranges temporary motel housing, pays them daily visits, coaxes lists of lost objects from them, pours over family photographs in search of evidence to support a claim. "Is that a purebred?", Noah gently enquires of a gay couple who've just shown him a picture of themselves with their dog. They look at him with disgust, but he's not deterred. "What did you pay for it? \$500? What was the approximate value?"

Later one of the men seductively offers Noah a set of porn photographs taken in his former apartment. "You can't see much of the background", comments Noah perplexedly. Then he has sex with the man, as if, by recreating the images in the photograph, he will be able to assign them a value. Noah is also sexually involved with two women clients. He offers his body to alleviate their anxiety and boredom. "You're in a state of shock", he tells each of them, although his monotone voice, robotic gestures and guilt-stricken face suggest that he's really talking about himself.

Noah's domestic life revolves around Hera (Arsinée Khanjian), a film censor who lives with her sister and son in a model home in an otherwise abandoned housing tract. The film en-

courages us to assume that Noah and Hera are a couple. Noah is frequently in Hera's bedroom, but never in her bed. She treats him with a familiar contempt bordering on hatred. Hera knows that Noah's solicitousness is both paternalistic and narcissistic; nevertheless, she remains passively under his protection.

At work, Hera functions as errand daughter to the head of the censorship board (played by David Hemblen, the beefy-faced *pater familias* of *Speaking Parts* and *Family Viewing*). We never see the porn films the censors are rating, but we hear their moaning and groaning soundtracks. Hera's face remains inscrutable as cries of "dome-Daddy" fill the auditorium. Secretly, she's been videotaping the juiciest bits to show to her sister. A recent émigrée from Armenia who speaks no English, the sister becomes addicted to the tapes. They're her primer in the language and customs of North America.

Noah and Hera function as mediators, classifying and assigning value to objects. Unlike Noah, Hera is aware of her alienation. Copying the films is a subversive act; as punishment, the head censor's assistant traps Hera in the screening room, and while his boss watches from the projection booth, he tries to rape her.

The Adjuster's third 'family' unit is a rich couple – Bubba (Maury Chaykin) and Mimi (Gabrielle Rose). "They have the means to have everything they want, but they don't know what they need, so they try different things", Bubba explains to Noah, describing himself and his wife in the third person as if they were characters in the 'home movie' he plans to make using Hera and Noah's model home as the principal location. Among the "things" Bubba and Mimi have tried is a performance in which an entire football team lines up in an empty stadium to watch Mimi cheerlead to the rhythms of 'High School Confidential'. As the team captain prepares to reward Mimi for her efforts, Bubba turns his back on the scene and stares straight into the camera, protecting his wife from our gaze and reminding us of our complicity with his voyeurism.

Bubba's invasion and recreation of other people's lives is a more perverse version of what Noah does. Noah acquiesces to Bubba's desires – he rents the model house to him and moves Hera and the rest of the family to the motel where he keeps his other clients. Bubba's home movie climaxes with him burning down the house. As Talking Heads puts it, "He fights fire with fire". Noah catches Bubba spreading gasoline on the floor. "You've come in just when the person in the film who's supposed to live here decides it's time to stop playing house. So are you in or are you out?", Bubba bellows, shoving his face into Noah's. Noah flees and the house goes up in flames with Bubba and Mimi inside.

By destroying Noah's sham domesticity, Bubba proves that he is the real adjuster. The flashback which closes the film confirms what should have been obvious all along. Noah is not a man who leads a double life, cheating on his wife with his clients. Noah has no wife. Hera is just another client who was burned out of her house and whose claim was never settled. Noah hasn't lost his home because he never had one.

Although Noah is the only leading character



Inscrutable passions: Hera secretly videotapes the best bits from the pornographic movies that her bosses censor



Compassion junkie: Insurance adjuster Noah in bed with one of his clients, to whom he offers his body as a means of alleviating their sense of loss and frustration

not directly involved in film-making, he's the one who acts most like a director. Rushing from motel room to motel room, and from location to location, he desperately tries to keep everything under control. Named after a biblical patriarch, his position is that of a son struggling against his father's power. He resents the authority of the insurance company, which uses him "to clean up their messes", and allows the rapacious Bubba to rewrite his life.

Egoyan edits the film to Noah's rhythms, breaking the operatic flow of the narrative by compulsively shifting the scene just when the action starts to heat up. The editing not only represses the erotic fantasies the film threatens to unleash, it also heightens our awareness of our own voyeurism by refusing to allow us to see. Add to this the interlocking power struggles in which the only allowable positions are parent or child, and the entire film takes on the repulsive allure of the primal scene.

The Adjuster is an elaboration of the material Egoyan laid out more brutally in *Family Viewing*. Relentlessly claustrophobic, *Family Viewing* is about the Oedipal struggle between Stan, a video equipment salesman, and his son Van. Having driven his wife (Van's mother) away and placed her mother (Van's grandmother) in a nursing home, Stan is dedicatedly taping over treasured home video recordings – replacing idyllic images of young Van and his mother romping in the grass with clinically depicted sexual encounters between himself and his live-in girlfriend, who not-so-secretly also has the hots for Van. With the help of a young woman who works in a telephone sex establishment (where Stan is one of her clients), Van

manages to rescue the tapes from Stan's clutches, his grandmother from the nursing home, and his mother from a homeless shelter. Van establishes a new household with the three women, and Stan, who's been frantically pursuing them, is wiped out by a heart attack.

Family Viewing is remarkable for its use of video technology. Stan's bedroom diary and Van's baby pictures were actually recorded on consumer VHS; the living-room scenes involving Stan, Van and the girlfriend were produced sitcom-style, using three studio television cameras. Surveillance camera footage and broadcast images were frequently intercut with the action. Transferred for theatrical release to 16mm, the image has a degenerated look which functions both expressively and metaphorically in relation to the narrative.

Egoyan followed *Family Viewing* with *Speaking Parts*. In terms of its technology, the film is set about five years in the future. In one of the more memorable scenes, two characters engage in mutual masturbation via videophone. In another, a sister discovers something she never knew about her beloved dead brother by watching a home movie in a video mausoleum. Roughly described, *Speaking Parts* is about the making of a movie about organ transplants which takes the form of a television talk show. "If *Family Viewing* is about the absence of familial love", says Egoyan, "then *Speaking Parts* is about the withholding of romantic love". (And *The Adjuster* is about the confusion of the two.)

All relationships in both *Family Viewing* and *Speaking Parts* are mediated and transformed by video technology. The home video apparatus is a sex toy which fuels forbidden fantasies. It's

the object of a tug of war between the sons or daughters who need it to preserve childhood memories (incestuous yearnings) and the bad fathers who employ it to extend their power, rewriting personal history in the process.

Excepting Godard and Cronenberg, no other film-maker has explored the connection between technology and voyeurism and between home movies and pornography so intensely or intelligently. "It's the difficulty of representing the self in a society completely obsessed with representation that interests me". But if that's the problem Egoyan is addressing, then the 35mm wide-screen format of *The Adjuster* seems a bit of a dinosaur – cumbersome, irrelevant and outdated. Especially since Egoyan isn't using it to make 'gloss' Hollywood films.

If *The Adjuster* leaves Noah no choice but to start his life from scratch, Egoyan is in a similar position with regard to his film-making career. While *The Adjuster* has done well on the festival circuit, it's too unnerving a film to attract a large art house audience. And Egoyan openly admits that he doesn't want to be trapped into making more and more expensive films in order to placate audiences with mainstream production values. On the other hand, his relative fame makes him an unlikely candidate for arts council funding. Given the institutional constraints of film financing, it won't be easy for Egoyan to go back to using low-end technology. But nothing else will do.

'The Adjuster' opens on 29 May and is reviewed on page 38 of this issue.

Films as great as Gance's 'Napoléon' were made by Raymond Bernard, film-maker of French historical epics such as 'Les Misérables', claims Lenny Borger



Fighting for freedom: Robert Vidalin, centre, who also starred in Gance's 'Napoléon' takes to the barricades as Enjoiras, romantic leader of the insurrection in 'Les Misérables'

NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

● Ask the average foreign film buff to name the salient qualities of classic French cinema and the superlatives will flow, but adjectives such as 'epic' and 'spectacular' aren't likely to roll off the tongue. Despite the recent revival of a landmark film such as *Napoléon* (1927), an amnesia still obscures areas of France's film history, reinforcing the myth that the French have no talent for the epic and no business trying to compete with Hollywood.

Napoléon, Abel Gance's *magnum opus*, which captured the imagination of the 80s with its visionary sweep and narrative fire, did not spring out of a void: it was the supreme expression of an indigenous national genre – the historical fresco, or *épopée*, which flourished in the years prior to French poetic realism. Nourished largely by nineteenth-century melodrama and Romantic literature, it was a film tradition richer in importance and achievement – and in fine directors – than most historians have cared to admit.

Dressing history

The undisputed master of the genre was Raymond Bernard, who at the height of his career was dubbed the "French D. W. Griffith". His career, which spanned four decades from 1917 to 1958, included first-class films in other classical registers, but he was most admired for the handful of historical frescoes made between 1923 and 1933 – stylish epics and historical fantasies such as *The Miracle of the Wolves* (*Le Miracle des loups*, 1924), the recently rediscovered *The Chess Player* (*Le Joueur d'échecs*, 1927) and especially *Les Misérables* (1933), which was the swan song of the French spectacle film.

If the battle for the rehabilitation of Gance has been won, the same is hardly true for Bernard, despite the efforts of historians such as Kevin Brownlow and Richard Abel (and, in France, Jacques Salles, author of a 1983 monograph on the director). Though most of Bernard's films are now preserved, they are never revived in repertory houses, largely ignored by historians, and only dimly familiar to French (television) audiences. The December 1990 London theatrical premiere of the restored *The Chess Player* left audiences open-mouthed, but the event failed to stir much interest or curiosity on the other side of the Channel, where Bernard's centennial year came and went uncelebrated.

Bernard's error as an artist, if one is to believe the official French history books that

still mention him, was that he wasted his gifts on an inferior genre – the historical romance. Worse, Bernard, the man for the big budgets, prestige productions and glossy premieres in temples of high culture, was quickly pigeonholed as an 'official' director of the Third Republic. The tag has stuck, condescendingly: Bernard's shamefully neglected Great War epic, *The Wooden Crosses* (*Les Croix de bois*, 1931) is still shown occasionally on television, but only as a programme filler for Armistice Day commemorations.

Apart from his painful wartime experiences, nothing in Bernard's background and early career prepared him for his future vocation as epic storyteller of the screen. Born in Paris in 1891, the son of playwright and beloved *belle époque* wit Tristan Bernard, Raymond Bernard made his professional acting debut in his father's 1913 play, *Jeanne Doré*, a melodrama commissioned by the seventy-one-year-old *monstre sacré* Sarah Bernhardt. Three years later, on leave from the front, the young Bernard was re-enrolled alongside the ageing actress for a quickie film version of their erstwhile stage success.

Like many of his contemporaries, Bernard was stunned by the aesthetic revelation of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915), released in Paris in 1916. Invalided out of the army for poor health, he lost no time in joining his father at the Gaumont film studios, where they both worked with a promising young director named Jacques Feyder. Bernard *père* was Feyder's scriptwriter, Bernard *fils* the assistant director. Within a year, Raymond Bernard was a fully-fledged film-maker. For the next six years, father and son worked together on a series of modest bourgeois comedies and melodramas. In subject matter they were typical of the period, but in manner they were graced by Bernard's subtle direction.

Bernard's place in middle-of-the-road French film production seemed assured when, in mid-1923, he was asked to replace Robert Boudrioz as the director of an ambitious but floundering new historical production, *The Miracle of the Wolves*. The French film industry at this time was trying to upgrade its traditional costume drama to the standards of the spectacle film to which Italy, America and Germany had accustomed international film audiences. The Film d'Art's trendsetting production of *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (1908) and ambitious literary adaptations of the Pathé-affiliated SCAGL – most

famously the first French film version of *Les Misérables*, directed in 1912 by Albert Capellani – had inculcated pre-war audiences with a taste for period drama and pageantry.

The honour of France

Costume productions, economically unfeasible during the lean war years, made a vigorous comeback after the Armistice. Serial adaptations of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1918), *The Three Musketeers* (1921) and *The Mysteries of Paris* (1922) created a successful new mode for fanciful historical reconstructions based on nineteenth-century literary classics.

Between 1923 and 1926, La Société des Cinéromans, a powerful new production arm of Pathé Consortium, added production gloss and fashioned a house style with a series of episode films written directly for the screen. Many glorified events of the French Revolution or picaresque heroes of history and legend such as Henri IV, Vidocq, Mandrin, Surcouf or Fanfan-la-tulipe. The studio's masterpiece was the second screen version of *Les Misérables*, a seven-hour adaptation by Henri Fescourt, released in four parts in 1925. Cinéromans' films were noted for their superb use of landscape and many were graced by location shooting in and around landmark sites such as the châteaux of the Loire valley, Fontainebleau and the Palace of Versailles.

There was a tacit didactic purpose to these films: if their immediate goals were commercial, they also sought to celebrate French civilisation at a time when the nation was struggling to recover from a debilitating, unromantic war that had left millions dead and entire regions of northern France in ruin. By romanticising legendary battles and upheavals of the conveniently distant past, the film industry was performing a patriotic duty and participating in the national rehabilitation. The numerous historical productions of the 20s constituted a visual primer of French history, culture and architecture that could serve as propaganda both at home and abroad.

The Miracle of the Wolves was both part of this general strategy and a direct reaction to the shocking liberties that German and American films were taking with French history in super-productions such as Lubitsch's *Madame Dubarry* (1919) and Griffith's *Orphans of the Storm* (1921). The chauvinistic trade papers howled, calling for French films that would save both the honour of France and its film industry. An ►

SPECTACULAR STORIES

◀ ambitious young journalist, playwright and amateur historian, Henri Dupuy-Mazuel, seized the opportunity. Soliciting powerful sponsors in government, the arts and industry, he created an independent production company, La Société des Films Historiques, and announced a plan to emblazon the history of France – from the fifteenth century to 1914 – across a cycle of eighteen filmed chronicles, written by him for the screen and certified by a commission of eminent historians, who would serve as production advisors.

The first of these epics, *The Miracle of the Wolves*, would dramatise the fifteenth-century power struggle between Louis XI and Charles le Téméraire. The theme was not fortuitous: Louis XI's ascension to the throne and attempts to consolidate his power sounded the death knell of feudal medieval France. The script's catchphrase – “national unity” – was an unmistakable echo of the political slogans trumpeted by France's unstable post-war government, *Le Bloc national*, creating a correspondence between the events in the film and the political and ideological climate of the time.

Cinematic cocktail

With its unprecedented budget of eight million francs, *The Miracle of the Wolves* was a watershed in French production. The impressive studio sets, designed by the architect Robert Mallet-Stevens and veteran Jean Perrier, established new standards for art direction at a time when major commercial films were still employing stock sets in retrograde studio facilities. For the momentous battle scenes, Bernard received the co-operation of the French army, which lent entire squadrons of men as extras and even helped co-ordinate the big battle scenes in authentic military manner. *The Miracle of the Wolves* also created two new screen stars: the stage actor-director Charles Dullin, an inimitable and spidery Louis XI, whom Bernard imposed in a major cast shake-up, and the magnificent fortified city of Carcassonne, which, standing in for medieval Beauvais, made its movie debut as a historical decor to end historical decors. (You can see it, in cameo role, in the recent Kevin Costner *Robin Hood*.)

This first ‘national’ epic was an international triumph that forced open the American market. It restored self-respect to a film industry still convalescing from the deprivations of the war, during which it had lost domination of the international market to the Americans. The

industry's newly-won prestige was symbolised by a gala premiere of the film at the Paris Opéra in November 1924, in the presence of the President of the Republic and the nation's political, social and cultural élite. Henri Rabaud, a distinguished composer and director of the Paris Conservatoire, wrote a specially commissioned orchestral score for the occasion.

But *The Miracle of the Wolves* was first and foremost a showcase for spectacle and romance, a cinematic equivalent of the epic *chansons de geste*. Bernard's stylish showmanship had period texture, dramatic panache and grandeur. An assiduous student of film technique, he had understood the gracious rhythms of earlier French costume films and had flawlessly assimilated the epic styles of Griffith and DeMille – *Intolerance* (1916) and *Joan the Woman* (1916) had both been released in Paris in 1919. The clash of armies on the plains of Montlhéry, the title episode, in which wolves spare the film's heroine but maul her tormentors, and the climactic siege of Beauvais are thrilling set pieces, executed with breadth and a striking sense of realism.

Finally, it really didn't matter if Dupuy-Mazuel's story, with its theatrical *Romeo and Juliet*-styled romantic subplot and movieland reduction of medieval politics, was as unhistorical as the most fanciful of Hollywood swash-bucklers. It was French, a product of Gallic imagination, a heady cinematic cocktail of history, legend and fiction in the flamboyant tradition of Alexandre Dumas. And perfectly in line with Dumas' famous *mot* that it is all right to rape history on condition that you produce some children.

The Miracle of the Wolves heralded a golden age in lavish French historical pictures. The next few years saw not only Gance's *Napoléon*, but also such superb films as the Cinéromans' *Les Misérables* and its valedictory costume serial, *Fanfan-la-tulipe* (1925); two rival productions about the recently canonised Joan of Arc (Dreyer's expensive anti-epic *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc*, 1927, and Marc de Gastyne's more spectacular *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1929) and Henri Fescourt's *Monte Cristo* (1929), a near-definitive adaptation of the Dumas classic. This was also the heyday of Franco-German co-production strategies and costume romances with Imperial Russian and Slavic settings, a new sub-genre launched by the émigré Russian film communities in Paris and Berlin. The vogue was best exemplified by two cosmopolitan

superproductions tailored to the personality of émigré star, Ivan Mozhukhin: *Michel Strogoff* (1926), based on Jules Verne's naive vision of Russia under Alexandr II, and *Casanova* (1927), with its long satiric episode of the Venetian adventurer at the court of Catherine the Great. And Bernard himself, temporarily abandoning the national historical idiom of *The Miracle of the Wolves*, devoted his talents to two sumptuous historical romances set during Catherine the Great's reign.

Tension and mystery

The first of these was *The Chess Player*, which like *Napoléon* was restored at British initiative (again, Kevin Brownlow and his associates). The film was an ingenious Dupuy-Mazuel historical fantasy dealing with eighteenth-century Polish resistance against Russian oppression, and in particular with the enigmatic engineering genius, the Baron von Kempelen (played by Charles Dullin), who smuggles a wounded Polish patriot out of occupied Vilnius in his legendary chess-playing automaton. Logistically, *The Chess Player* was an even more complex production than *The Miracle of the Wolves*, since the major sets (which included nothing less than the facade of the Winter Palace in St Petersburg) had to be constructed at Joinville by the resourceful Jean Perrier (aided by the inestimable special effects of W. Percy Day, the future matte shot genius of British cinema). For the exteriors, the producers pulled off an extraordinary diplomatic coup by arranging to shoot the film's epic cavalry charge on location in Poland, with the full military co-operation of Marshal Pilsudki's government. Imaginatively edited and scored by Henri Rabaud, this bravura set piece brought the audience to its feet at the January 1927 premiere in a spontaneous ovation that Bernard would remember as one of the highlights of his career.

For *The Chess Player*, Bernard wasn't restricted to French history and its pictorial conventions. With the help of several erstwhile Gance collaborators fresh from the innovative ebullience of *Napoléon*, he was free to invent his own dynamic style. Unlike the tableaux manner of *The Miracle of the Wolves*, *The Chess Player* crackled from start to finish with movement, tension and mystery. Even compared to other period extravaganzas, it was unusual in its imaginative mixture of historical intrigue and science fantasy, the latter represented by the Baron von Kempelen's eerie collection of life-size ►



The power and the glory:
Harry Baur as a Jean Valjean for all times in Raymond Bernard's 1933 version of 'Les Misérables', a socially abject but extraordinarily powerful ex-convict preparing to steal his benefactor Archbishop Myriel's silver, left; Sister Semplice with Jean Valjean, who is ready to slough off his accrued identity as Monsieur Madeleine to save another man from prison, above right

With its stirring
representation of
responses to oppression,
Raymond Bernard's
'Les Misérables' was the
best film the popular
front never produced



◀ mechanical figures, which in the film's supernatural climax dispatch the villain while their creator meets no less eerie a death in the Russian court.

Following two such riveting successes, *Tarakanova* (1929) was a relative disappointment and a commercial flop. A beautiful production shot entirely on the French Riviera, it was a Slavic romance about the rise and fall of a pretender to the throne of Catherine the Great. The production had even greater pictorial splendour than its predecessors, but lacked their panache, dramatic control and strong central performances. Shot as the talkies were invading Europe, it was shelved for a year and then rushed into release in mid-1930 with an appended music track. The film had its admirers, however, among them a young critic named Marcel Carné.

The talkies invalidated the artistic ambitions of many of Bernard's talented colleagues of the silent days, Gance in particular. But Bernard, who understood the aesthetics of sound film better than many of his contemporaries and was commercially more adaptable, enjoyed a second career. In 1931 he became a contract director at the modernised Pathé studios, now run by the ambitious movie mogul Bernard Natan, a Romanian immigrant and pioneer within the industry.

Natan had produced one of the most nationalistic of the great, late silent epics: *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. Now he wanted to consolidate his motion picture empire with a series of prestige productions that would demonstrate how France could meet the challenge of the talkies, the Depression and – once again – Hollywood. Natan and his brother Emile, in charge of production, set their sights on two major projects: *The Wooden Crosses*, based on Roland Dorgeles' best-selling 1919 autobiographical war novel, and that dependable champion of screen adaptations, *Les Misérables*. From the start there was no question that Raymond Bernard would be the director.

Premiered in Geneva at the League of Nations in March 1932, *The Wooden Crosses* was conceived as France's response to America's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and Germany's *Westfront 1918* (*Vier von der Infanterie*, 1930), which had injected a new morbidity into the genre, though in its sheer harrowing power, Bernard's film often surpasses the Milestone and Pabst epics. Pacifist in intent, *The Wooden Crosses* was a dirge-like, quasi-documentary chronicle about

the gradual decimation of a French unit. There was no rear-line romance, no melodramatic subplot, no battleground heroics, no anti-Boche sentiment, and no moral uplift. Bernard's direction was bone-spare and clinical, marred only by some moments of expressionist symbolism. The battle scenes, shot on location in the battle-scarred Champagne region, were grimly unrelenting and so realistically staged that some viewers mistook them for inserted sonorised newsreels. The entire cast, including the stars Pierre Blanchar and Charles Vanel, were combat veterans who brought to their parts a haunting sense of recall – Blanchar had been a gas victim – and a total absence of mannerism.

Back-handed tribute

The film was a triumph in France and Belgium, and seemed the ideal candidate to represent French film artistry abroad. But one of the first things the Nazis did in 1933 was to ban it (along with the Milestone and Pabst films). Then Hollywood paid Bernard and his brilliant cameraman Jules Krüger the most back-handed of tributes: Darryl F. Zanuck bought the film, shelved it and cannibalised the stunning combat footage as stock shots in his own productions. You can still see Pierre Blanchar lobbing hand grenades in Howard Hawk's 1936 *The Road to Glory*.

Les Misérables, by contrast, was a return to the glorious epic manner of the 20s superproductions and the stylish literary adaptations, mediated by the myth-making genius of Victor Hugo. Coming only eight years after Henri Fescourt's admirable silent version for Cinéromans, it may have seemed like a gratuitous commercial risk. But *Les Misérables* is the sort of timeless classic that ignored (and still ignores) fashion and cultural differences. By 1933 it had been filmed several times abroad in countries as far afield as the US, Italy and Japan.

Socially and politically too, *Les Misérables* had renewed contemporary pertinence. Hugo's melodramatic vision of social injustice and human cruelty was just as likely to touch a chord in Depression audiences as it had moved filmgoers in the more frivolous climates of 1912 and 1925. The romantic evocation of the Paris insurrection of 1832, with its idealistic freedom fighters dying on the barricades in the name of the French Revolution and Republican ideals, had bitter resonance at a moment when the foundations of the scandal-torn Third

Republic were coming under attack from the French extreme right. Three days after the film's 1934 gala premiere, Paris was bloodied by the infamous anti-parliamentary riots of 6 February, presenting a terrifying counterimage to Bernard's heroic tableaux. With its stirring representation of individual and collective responses to oppression, *Les Misérables* was the best film the Popular Front never produced.

If this version of *Les Misérables* remains the finest of the cinema's three dozen, it is first because it is the best written, a model of literary adaptation in its clarity, quintessential characterisation, unerring sense of ellipsis and rigorous dramatic construction. To tackle this first sound version, Bernard called upon a talented friend, the critic and playwright André Lang. Together they cut, pruned and reshaped Hugo's unwieldy and frequently ludicrous plot into a smoothly articulated screenplay which preserves both the melodramatic armature (minus the wilder plot contrivances) and, no less important, the historical time frame.

The script is full of subtle scene paintings and miniatures of life under the Restoration, in good part because all the major and many of the secondary figures of the Hugolian gallery are vividly transferred from page to screen. Early French talkies were notorious for their bad dialogue, so Lang's dialogue, both adaptation and extrapolation of the novel's verbose discourse, was all the more remarkable for its economy and intelligence. The quality was striking in such key scenes as Jean Valjean's deathbed adieu, in which Lang whittled down an unrealistic Hugolian lump of rhetoric to extract a dying man's gasp for tolerance and compassion – which was also a précis of Hugo's key theme.

Crystallising entire chunks of the novel in a single poetic image or sequence, Bernard too displayed to the full his gifts as a pictorialist. The introductory scene, stunningly lighted by Jules Krüger, is of close-ups of a frieze of grimacing caryatids. Ponderous, facile symbolism, one thinks... until we realise that one of the 'gargoyles' is Jean Valjean, the convict, helping workers to hoist statues into place on a building facade. Here too is Hugo's theme in a miniature – the crushing indifference of society – and the fundamental expository elements: Valjean's social abjection and superhuman strength.

The familiar tale, etched in chiaroscuro images strongly reminiscent of Hugo's own



Raymond Bernard

10 October 1891 – 12 December 1977

Le Ravin sans fond (1917)
Le Traitement du hoquet (1918)
Le Gentilhomme commerçant (1919)
Le Petit café (1919)
Le Secret de Rosette Lambert (1920)
La Maison vide (1921)
Triplepatte (1922)
Le Costaud des Epinettes (1922)
Décadence et grandeur (1923)
L'Homme inusable (1923)
Le Miracle des loups (1924)
Le Joueur d'échecs (1927)
Tarakanova (1929)
Faubourg-Montmartre (1931)
Les Croix de bois (1931)
Les Misérables (1933)

Tartarin de Tarascon (1934)
Amants et voleurs (1935)
Anne-Marie (1936)
Le Coupable (1936)
Marthe Richard, au service de la France (1937)
J'étais une aventurière (1938)
Les Otages (1938)
Cavalcade d'amour (1939)
Un Ami viendra ce soir (1945)
Adieu chérie (1945)
Maya (1949)
Le Jugement de Dieu (1949)
Le Cap de l'espérance (1951)
La Dame aux camélias (1953)
La Belle de Cadix (1953)
Les Fruits de l'été (1955)
Le Septième commandement (1957)
Le Septième ciel (1958)

Unkindest of cuts

Like many classic films of unconventional length, *Les Misérables* suffered the outrages of the cutting room floor. Raymond Bernard and co-scriptwriter André Lang fought hard to impose their three-part concept on their producers. They later were to fight even harder to pick up the pieces after unscrupulous hands hacked their work down to more commercial dimensions.

Les Misérables opened in February 1934 as three independent features, running in three of Paris' finest first-run houses. Their precise running times are today impossible to establish, French trade papers then (as now) being notoriously unreliable about such matters. But to judge from contemporary articles and reviews, the original release prints appear to have been about 26,300 feet (just short of five hours).

Then the mutilations began. In May 1935, Pathé re-released the film in a condensed single feature lasting

only two-and-a-half hours. Did Bernard and Lang consent to this brutal reduction? In later years, the director himself would only recall supervising a two-part version (abridged to under four hours) for re-issue and exportation. In any event, New Yorkers in October 1936 finally saw the Bernard film in a single feature, lasting (according to *Variety*) 162 minutes.

In 1944, Bernard and Lang, both Jews, emerged from clandestinity to discover yet another version of their film on local screens: now in two parts, it had been relieved of all the revolutionary sections and a number of other scenes. Unable to restore the film to its original 1934 length, they nevertheless succeeded, after a long legal battle, in getting some of the unkindest cuts restored. This is the version, running at 204 minutes, that has been the only available one for decades.

The story has a happy ending. In the early 70s, Pathé invited Bernard and his editor, Charlotte Guilbert, to reconstruct the three-part 1934 version for the ORTF, which was commissioning the effort. The task was daunting: no prints of the three-part version remained, the

original post-production script had been lost, and the nitrate negative, miraculously preserved, was a celluloid chaos of tiny negative rolls. Worse, the aging director was going blind.

But Guilbert proved to have a near-perfect memory of the original continuity, and after long, painstaking months spent in the editing room, *Les Misérables* was finally restored to within a few minutes of its initial length and montage (about 275 minutes). One important sequence – Valjean's theft of the silverware in Archbishop Myriel's bedroom – was never found. And both Bernard and Guilbert somehow overlooked the first scenes of the Arras trial, which had been preserved in the negative of the 1944 version.

Les Misérables was broadcast in all its original narrative and pictorial splendour on French television in July 1977. Bernard, now a fragile eighty-six-year-old and completely blind, sat hunched up near his television set, listening to his film as he reran in his mind the images he had not seen in their entirety in over forty years. He died several months later, on 12 December 1977.

volvement in the action. We are far from the often soulless technical perfectionism of the Hollywood spectacular.

Les Misérables also boasts a near-ideal cast, dominated by the presence and extraordinary range of Harry Baur – a Jean Valjean for all times. At first frightening in his brutish downtrodden rage, then inspirational in his regenerated role as social benefactor and foster father, Baur is finally tragic as a dying man who realises he has never lived. In a beautiful piece of homage-casting, Bernard has the Archbishop Myriel played by Henry Krauss, the great silent film actor who was the first Jean Valjean twenty years earlier. Charles Vanel is a definitive Javert, revealing fissures of vulnerability in the monolithic facade of the letter-of-the-law *flic*. His tragic disarray in the face of Valjean's Christian goodness is one of the film's finest moments. Charles Dullin and Marguerite Moreno are perfect as those gusty grotesques, the Thenardiers, Hugo's embodiments of the evil poor. Odette Florelle, the beloved 30s *chanteuse*, pulls out all the melodramatic stops as the pathetic Fantine, the seduced and abandoned Paris seamstress. The young Jean Servais is a dreamy Marius, while his sprightly royalist grandfather, Gillenormand, is played by the irrepressibly eccentric Max Dearly. The children, Cosette and the street urchin Gavroche, seem to have stepped out of the engravings in the popular editions of Hugo's novel.

Unlike *The Miracle of the Wolves*, Bernard's *Les Misérables* was not a beginning but an end. It was both a summing-up of the director's grand manner and the swan song of a certain type of French cinema: spectacular, artful and popular in the best sense. This cinema died with the mid-decade collapse of Pathé-Natan and fellow industry major, Gaumont-Franco Film-Aubert. With their disappearance went the Hollywood-like infrastructure and studio systems necessary for the large-scale superproductions. There would, of course, be several more big glossy films of the 30s (Feyder's Tobis-produced *Carnival in Flanders*, 1935, and Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, 1937, whose production had to be launched by a national subscription). But as sumptuous as these films were, they tended to subordinate pageantry and spectacle to the literary scripts and bravura acting displays that we today associate with the golden age of French cinema.

'Les Misérables' will be screened on BBC television later this year.

black and white ink drawings, unfolds in a measured, mesmerising rhythm, scanned by Arthur Honegger's brooding score. With nearly five hours of screen time to fill and a large number of characters and situations to dramatise, it is inevitable that Bernard's direction (which tries to negotiate a compromise between the aesthetics of silent and sound cinema) occasionally falters, slowing at times to a static theatrical tread quite typical of early French talkies. The film too is nagged by the systemised use of tilt shots that are effective in its big dramatic set pieces (particularly in the Arras tribunal sequence) but often seem disruptive in its more intimate moments.

Peak of epic film-making

But when the private destinies of Hugo's characters are suddenly plunged into the public turbulence of history, Bernard's direction rises to a new peak of epic film-making. Unlike Fescourt, who had to film his big scenes in a studio reconstruction, Bernard and designer Jean Perrier were given the time, resources and extras to

recreate entire sections of nineteenth-century Paris on exterior locations. (Their monumental sets were erected on a stretch of land near Antibes.) The flamboyant rioting and fighting at the barricades is the fullest expression of Hugo's romanticism in the cinema since Gance's 'Double Tempest' in *Napoléon* (inspired by a passage in *Quatre-vingt-treize*).

Bernard's grasp and style is superlative. He is everywhere in his huge canvas: painting the historical tableaux and the private detail, leaping from the general to the particular, apotheosising the collective *élan* and the individual gesture of daring and sacrifice. The overall design, the implacable movement, is flawlessly executed, vibrantly humane, thrillingly romantic. The bravura camerawork (hand-held shots reminiscent of Krüger's work on *Napoléon*), the supple editing, the use of sound (drums intensifying the unbearable sense of anticipation and dread), music (the insurrectionists singing 'La Marseillaise' on the barricades), and the perfect ensemble acting all concur to create for the audience a powerful sensation of in-



'The Playboys' confirms Ireland as a fashionable setting for current films – but what kind of Ireland or 'Irishness' has figured in cinema, from 'Gone With the Wind' to 'The Commitments', asks Kevin Rockett?

FROM ATLANTA TO DUBLIN

● *The Playboys*, Gillies MacKinnon's new film, opens at a moment when Irish cinema, or rather cinema about Ireland, has been much in the news. *The Commitments* won a BAFTA award; Daniel Day Lewis and Brenda Fricker won Oscars for their performances in *My Left Foot*; *Hear My Song* is proving a critical and box office success; and the blockbuster Irish migration story, *Far and Away*, with Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, will be released this summer. Yet only one of these films (*My Left Foot*) has an Irish director (Jim Sheridan), and with the exception of part of the funding for that film, finance for all the others came from non-Irish sources. As Ireland as a country and a culture is judged in part by the images conveyed by these films, it seems worth asking what kind of image of Ireland is being forged – and how does *The Playboys*, directed by a Scot, financed by Americans, and co-written by an Irishman, fit within past and present representations of the country? Does it necessarily follow that because a film is made by an Irish film-maker with Irish money, its representation of Ireland will be any more astute or authentic than that by a non-Irish film-maker?

Lacking a strong indigenous cinematic tradition, a peripheral film culture such as Ireland's – operating within the highly capitalised international film market with very little state financial support – has to proceed with guile as it seeks to portray itself on the screen. It must acknowledge the residual representations of its culture in the metropolitan centres while simultaneously attempting to carve out, sometimes in a consciously parodic manner, a criti-

cal engagement with that cinema. Somewhat rarely in international cinema, *The Playboys* has been able to realise some of these ambitions, in part through its exploration (or lack of it) of landscape. Characters in foreign films set in Ireland have frequently been seen as subservient to the wild landscape (*Man of Aran*, 1934; *Ryan's Daughter*, 1970) or to the pastoral (*The Quiet Man*, 1952). *The Playboys* eschews such clichés. With the exception of introductory shots of a cloudy sky and still river, the countryside is not exploited as either peopleless or workless; rather, it can be a place of danger (the boy's killing of fish in a river with a stolen IRA detonator; Tara and Tom almost drowning), or of work (hay-gathering).

Hear My Song (1992), by contrast, follows the most trodden of all Irish cinematic journeys as it shifts location from the urban Liverpool-Irish milieu to Dublin and then to the bucolic countryside before experiencing the recuperative powers of the west of Ireland. En route, it transforms urban 'realism' into an enduring genre of Anglo-American cinema: Irish leprechaunism. (Forty years ago, *The Quiet Man* produced its own leprechaun in Barry Fitzgerald as well as an urban Irish-American, Sean Thornton, played by John Wayne, who arrived in the anti-industrial, fun-loving, work-shy west of Ireland.) *The Playboys* cuts across such clichés and asserts a vision of Ireland which goes against the grain of 'tradition' in favour of 'modernisation'. However, it does this without losing sight of the fact that it too is staging the rural. Its outsider figure is local garda sergeant, Hegarty (Albert Finney), who, unlike Thornton in *The*

Quiet Man, is never integrated within the community. The temporary visitors, the players, continually introduce an awareness of artifice through their shows, for example in their parodies of the 1798 Rising.

The Playboys is about the events precipitated by the birth of a son to the unmarried, but economically independent Tara (Robin Wright) and how she and the local community react when a troupe of players visits their village with an annual show. Tara's name alerts us to Irish historical and cinematic resonances: the name is derived from the hill where the pre-Christian Palace of the High Kings of Ireland was located; in *Gone With the Wind* (1939), a film which has resonances in *The Playboys*, the O'Hara mansion is named Tara. The identity of the father of Tara's baby is never revealed, but early in the film an economically marginalised small farmer commits suicide when rejected by her, indicating to many locals that he was the father. But when Hegarty too is rejected by her,



Outsiders: Scarlett O'Hara in 'Gone With the Wind', top; Albert Finney as Sergeant Hegarty in 'The Playboys', above



Against the grain: Robin Wright as Tara, an unusual representation of Irish womanhood, with her baby – the sign of her defiant independence as well as her ‘shame’

her transgression of social norms produces tensions within the community. At the centre of this conflict is the priest, Father Malone (Alan Devlin), who attempts to pressurise Tara into marrying Hegarty.

The Playboys is set in 1957, a year in which Ireland was on the brink of great change. Even conservative elements within Irish society had recognised the need for radical measures, and in that year a key governmental report, ‘Economic Development’, was initiated. Published the following year, the document led to an important intellectual shift in Ireland’s relationship to the rest of the world. At a purely economic level, the failure of native capital to develop a manufacturing base, or its major industry, agriculture, to match productivity levels of Ireland’s competitors, led to the embracing of transnational capital as a means of establishing a manufacturing sector and to the desire to join the European Community. Though these policy changes were fuelled by immediate economic needs, they eventually led to positive and progressive engagement with international culture and debate in a manner not seen since before independence from Britain in 1922. One contributor to that modernising enterprise was television, which in 1957 was confined to the ‘overspill’ of British television signals in Ireland. It was not until the end of 1961 that the Irish national channel came on air.

In *The Playboys*, the village’s first television set is installed in a pub. As the worried and essentially redundant manager of the players, Freddie (Milo O’Shea), realises, from now on it is *The*

Lone Ranger and other programmes that will vie for the community’s attention. Within a few years, a critical questioning of all aspects of Irish society, not least institutions such as the Catholic Church, was being encouraged through debate in the broadcasting media and the wider availability of foreign popular culture as the censorship restrictions imposed in the 20s were loosened. *The Playboys* in a sense charts the optimistic beginnings of this ‘modernising’ process for the younger generation.

The origins of *The Playboys* are in *A Border Station* (1989), a semi-autobiographical series of stories by Shane Connaughton, co-writer of the script. The book has the same fictional location as the film (Butlershill, Co. Cavan) and the central authority figure of Hegarty. In the book, Hegarty is observed from the viewpoint of his son (who remains nameless) as he progresses from childhood to maturity. While Hegarty, in both book and film, is portrayed as a difficult and frustrated man (not least because of his backwater posting), his wife, the book’s real heroine, retains a quiet aura of strength and beauty which is conveyed both through her son’s eyes and by the manner in which she is regarded by other villagers. It is this strength, if not always serenity, which is conveyed in the character of Tara in *The Playboys*.

Tara’s independence and defiance of the community is revealed most directly by her refusal to disguise her pregnancy at a time when unmarried mothers-to-be were often confined in institutions until their children were born or were forced to go to relatives in England to avoid ‘shaming’ their families. The

birth of Tara’s child, by contrast, is signalled publicly when she has to leave church suddenly in the middle of mass as her ‘waters’ break. This very public moment, which is usually so private, shocks priest and parishioners alike. It is through Tara’s defiance of social conventions that the more open, younger generation is demarcated from the old.

As Tara develops a relationship with one of the players, Tom (Aidan Quinn), she ever more publicly challenges social and religious conventions. She arrives at the communal hay-gathering with her baby astride a donkey led by Tom in a self-conscious parody of the ideal (‘sexless’) family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. On another occasion, she and Tom mock the community by making love in a rocking caravan on the village green. For the priest, as he tells his parishioners during a church sermon, the problem is that “scandal is a contagion” and “one sinner can infect a whole community”. When he demands to know the name of the man “who wronged her”, Tara leaves the church in protest. She later tells Malone that she will never forgive him for criticising her from the pulpit. It only remains a matter of time before her unconventional behaviour leads her to leave the community. Indeed, her horizons are already focused beyond the village, with or without Tom. (Tom, a mischievous playboy, has even been to America, which like Dublin is a place of fascination for Tara, as her experience of the bodily ►

◀ liberation to be found in American popular music testifies.)

When the inevitable and climactic fight between Tom and Hegarty occurs, many locals are seen to favour the sergeant, and by extension his search for a 'normal' family. This fight signals the film's resolution, and as the morally defeated Hegarty silently acknowledges Tara's determination to remain with Tom, he chooses to leave the village and the garda. Tara also has the resolve to depart. As Tom waits anxiously for Tara on the morning of the players' departure, she arrives and kisses him before placing the baby in his arms and mounting his motorbike. The bewildered Tom is forced to climb into the sidecar as Tara starts the engine to drive away; though she is leaving for a new life with him, her independence will not be compromised. As the players' convoy leaves, one of the local boys (the narrator from *A Border Station*?) runs after them to the edge of the village. When the credits roll, the boy's image is frozen as he gazes after the players. It is clear that the next generation is already looking beyond the limited horizons of the village.

Tara's refusal to conform is in sharp contrast with many other cinematic characterisations of Irish women. While Mary Kate (Maureen O'Hara) in *The Quiet Man* has been cited as representing a liberating view of Irish women, this is far from the case. This ambiguous, open-ended film presents an apparently economically and sexually independent woman, while simultaneously demonstrating the limits of her autonomy in a sometimes sadistic patriarchal world. Indeed, Mary Kate's search for independence is somewhat bogus, as what she is seeking is the dowry that will enable her to have a conventional marriage. Yet even Mary Kate's relative independence is an exception within American cinema, which more usually presents the nurturing Irish mother, who can be seen in such contrasting early sound films as *The Public Enemy* (1931) and *The Irish in Us* (1935), in which the Irish-American son (James Cagney) receives his mother's understanding and support even as he transgresses social norms.

The origins of these representations lie in the silent era, when a great many films featuring Irish and Jewish families were made. That these Irish-Jewish stories proved a staple of ethnic cinema during the early decades is not unconnected to the fact that both cultures featured strong, organising matriarchal figures. These representations were mobilised by the cinema during a period of massive migration to the US as a means of furthering the messages of assimilation, integration, cultural understanding and the reinforcement of traditional family values. By the 20s, as first-generation Irish-Americans moved further from their roots and began to mingle with and even marry into the WASP establishment, these norms were breached. Yet despite occasional outbursts of independence, often represented by exuberant physical energy (as in the Colleen Moore character in *Irene*, 1925) representations of Irish women usually reinforced the social, ethnic and sexual status quo rather than presenting any redefinition of traditional roles.

It was not until the 80s that things began to



View across the water: John Wayne as the urban American visitor to the west of Ireland in 'The Quiet Man', top; the urban Irish imagining America in 'The Commitments', above

change. And not surprisingly, the work that engaged most critically with traditional representations came from women working within a committed and independent indigenous Irish cinema. Films such as Pat Murphy's *Maeve* (1981) and Anne Devlin (1984) heralded the new possibilities. While *Maeve* examines the competing discourses of republicanism and feminism in present-day Belfast, *Anne Devlin* explores the life of this Irishwoman around the time of the 1803 Rebellion against English rule. Despite being jailed after the Rebellion, Devlin's role has been seen as peripheral – a reflection of women's subsidiary role in the writing of history and the selective remembering of the past. The representation of her resolute refusal to provide information for her jailers – her 'silence' – acts as a powerful metaphor for women's resistance.

Another Irish independent production, Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-Bye-Baby* (1990) explored responses in a working-class Derry community to a schoolgirl's unplanned pregnancy (particularly the reaction of her boyfriend). Made against the background of the abortion debate that took place in Ireland during the 80s, and which has acquired a new urgency in 1992, it showed the young woman's struggle to make a choice within a community where independent material and emotional action is not often an option.

Murphy's and Harkin's films were independent productions. But once a film's cultural and economic control shifts across the Irish Sea or the Atlantic the challenge to traditional ethnic and gender stereotypes becomes more difficult. In *The Commitments*, for example, each of the three women singers in turn has a relationship with Joey 'The Lips' (Johnny Murphy), but the British-directed and American-funded film reorientates these relationships from their portrayal in the book towards personal rivalries

that contribute to the group's break-up. At this juncture, the group has been awaiting the approval of the outsider, Wilson Pickett, but when he fails to appear conflict and ultimate failure seem inevitable. Another feature of the film, but not of the book, is the priest: after all, how could an Irish film do without one, even if a 'trendy', streetwise type? All that was missing was his acoustic guitar. The character of Joey's mother (also not in the book) carries some of the negative representational burden of elderly Irish women. While her violin playing to a statue of the Virgin Mary is undermined by Joey, upstairs, playing 'Sex Machine' before making love to one of *The Commitmentettes*, it nevertheless reinforces an image of the mother figure as having an absurd devotion to religion and a passionate indulgence of her son.

Elderly women have often been portrayed unsympathetically in both documentaries and dramas about Ireland. The opening sequence of Robert Kee's series, *Ireland: A Television History* (1982), or Channel Four/RTE's IRA thriller, *The Price* (1984), both use ('irrational') elderly women – who are contrasted with the 'rational' narrator's voice, in Kee's case, or appear to side with the ruthless IRA in *The Price* – to articulate unsympathetic viewpoints. The blind and elderly Mrs Fagan in *The Playboys* seems to be drawn from these same representations in her refusal of a 'rational' explanation for the restoration of her sight during one of the players' 'magical' acts. However, this could be seen as a gain as much as a loss since in the process of her appearing to embrace 'pagan' irrationality she abandons the formal and authoritarian religious practice of Father Malone and the rest of the community.

Perhaps the most severe criticism of *The Commitments* can be reserved for the way it depicts Dublin as a 'Third World' location: Beirut and Vietnam are both cited as helpful reference points by the reviewer in *Sight and Sound* (October 1991). And indeed, the script's explicit reference to Ireland as a Third World country is reinforced by many visual cues. It may be comforting for outsiders to view Dublin as another Beirut (though that city is more usually twinned with Belfast, not least because it grants a certain fashionable and morally superior Otherness to European Ireland). That Otherness, though, can have an unpleasant ring to it in its working-class attitude to non-whites and countrypeople.

In the book, Jimmy Rabbitte, the group's manager, tells his new recruits during his 'lecture' on identity that "The Irish are the niggers of Europe... And Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. The culchie [countrypeople] have fuckin' everthin'. And the northside Dubliners are the niggers o' Dublin. Say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud". The film sanitised this racially ambiguous remark, and in the process also lost its important urban/rural reference point. "The Irish are the blacks of Europe", Jimmy (Robert Arkins) declares in the film's much quoted lines, "and Dubliners are the blacks of Ireland, and northside Dubliners are the blacks of Dublin". The film's effacement of rural Ireland and its disproportionate political, if not always

Director Gillies MacKinnon talks
to Mark Kermode about emigration,
escape, Annette Bening and
The Playboys' American backers

The American Connection

● Last year, Gillies MacKinnon won the coveted Michael Powell award for his film *The Grass Arena*, a startling dramatisation of the early life and tribulations of alcoholic-turned-writer, John Healy. Commissioned by the BBC for around £700,000, *The Grass Arena* won acclaim on the international festival circuit, and even garnered a distributor's prize at Dinard; it has yet to receive a theatrical release.

Born in Glasgow, where he studied painting at the Royal School of Art, MacKinnon served for many years as a youth worker, organising music workshops and film-making classes for destitute teenagers. His first film, *Passing Glory*, told of a widow caught in a tug of war between the Communist Party and the Church of Scotland for the rights to her deceased husband's body; the film climaxes with the widow stealing back the corpse, to which she then gives a full Viking funeral on the shores of Loch Lomond. MacKinnon's subsequent work has included an adaptation of Manfred Karge's play *Conquest of the South Pole*, and a gruelling BBC film about drug addiction, *Needle*. MacKinnon's latest film, *The Playboys*, was made by Britain's Green Umbrella for the American-based Samuel Goldwyn company; although technically a British production, the funding for *The Playboys* was entirely American.

At least half Irish

"*The Playboys* is not an Irish film. I see it as an international film set in Ireland. A lot of the crew are Irish, but many of the personnel involved are English or Scottish. I come from Glasgow and, of course, about one-third of the Glaswegian population is of Irish origin. There have been centuries of comings and goings between the two places. Scriptwriter Shane Connaughton's father was a policeman in this small village in Ireland, and my own father was a policeman in Glasgow, so the themes of the script all seemed very familiar to me. Then we had American financiers, and mostly Irish actors, but with a couple of Americans and one Englishman.

"As far as the issue of having two Americans in the cast is concerned, I actually think the Americans are better qualified to go to Ireland and do Irish accents

and so forth than English actors. The connection between Ireland and America is very strong, but there has always been that wall between Ireland and England. The immigrant/emigrant issue is so powerful in Celtic mythology, and of course that's partly what *The Playboys* is about.

"Having said that, there was a problem when I was casting the film in America, and looking for actors who would be acceptable to the Goldwyns, because I was continually being told: 'This actor or actress is Irish'. And then I'd meet them, and there would be nothing Irish about them. Maybe their name would be Irish, and that would be enough for the Goldwyns. However, when I met up with Aidan Quinn, it was clear that this was at least half an Irishman. He'd spent about four years of his life in Ireland when he was young, and his family then emigrated to America. Then Annette Bening was going to do the film, over which Goldwyn's are now involved in some horrible law suit. I met her in LA and we got on really well; she thought it was a great part. But things became complicated with the whole Warren Beatty business, and eventually it fell through.

"So I went back to America to recast the part. The first time I met Robin Wright she was pregnant and she'd been a little bit off the air. But by the second time she'd had the baby, and I got the feeling that this was a real Grace Kelly kind of actress. She was incredibly committed to getting the accent right – we had a very good dialect coach who worked with all the actors, but more so with Robin because she had no connection with Ireland. Now people come up to me and ask whether she's Irish or English – it doesn't occur to them that she's American".

International film-making

"I'm not really interested in British film. It's not something I've ever followed. I've always been more interested in European films: Tarkovsky, Bergman, early Milos Forman, Visconti – these are the people who moved me. On the whole I don't find British film-making very passionate.

"So I definitely think of myself as an 'international' film-maker, and I'd work anywhere if the project was right. But (and this is something which I have to think hard about), I am also a Scot. I've left Scotland, as has my brother Billy, who produced Jane Campion's *Sweetie*. He's got a film company in Australia, and Billy and I are currently writing a film about East End Glasgow in the 60s. I want to make a Scottish film; in fact, my ambition is to

make a big Scots film like *Robert the Bruce*. I'm not really interested in making little Scottish films and being a 'Scottish film-maker', but I would love to get back to my roots and tackle something fundamental. And I wouldn't want to treat it with rose-tinted spectacles, but really get in there with big bloody boots on and look at our history".

A simpler world

"*The Playboys* is set in the late 50s, which was really the end of the travelling 'Playboy' theatres. Shane Connaughton was a young lad at that time, so these things clearly made a big impression on him. Also, this was the period of the coming of television, which undermined a certain way of life.

"I suppose that in some ways I relate to a simpler world which I remember passing away. I was born in 1948, and certainly when I was a boy the world was an incredibly simple place in comparison with the lives of my children today. The tram cars passed a few feet from my window, we didn't have television, and we spent all our spare time running around in air-raid shelters, in our mind turning them into Foreign Legion forts, RAF bombers, prisons – they were the object of our fantasy.

"Another thread which places *The Playboys* in the 50s is the story of Tara Maguire. The 60s were all about young people getting more independent, but in 1957 Tara is still completely subject to the values and decrees of the village. So there's a strong sense of the need to escape in *The Playboys*, which is perhaps the case with all the films I've made. I suppose that in some ways that's what I did myself, because I left my home and came to London, and I must be half a Londoner now.

"The meaning of a closing shot in *The Playboys*, in which Albert Finney walks away from the village, provoked a great disagreement between us and the Goldwyns. All of us on the European side saw a man who had been living an unreal life, full of illusions, torturing himself, in love with a woman who would never go for him, in a job that was killing him, living a miserable and unhappy existence from which he was finally released. He may not be all right, we don't know, but at least he's moving on. For me, it was almost an 'up' ending. But the American side saw it in much simpler terms: he's lost everything. You can't leave an audience with that. So to the Americans he was a loser, to the Europeans he had found a way to break free. We had totally different views of what it all meant".

cultural, influence runs counter to the impetus behind the writings of Roddy Doyle, Dermot Bolger and others, whose work has been characterised as Northside Realism.

While *The Commitments* has been viewed in Ireland as much as elsewhere as if it were the first film to deal with displaced or disaffected Dubliners, this is not the case. Joe Comerford's films since the mid-70s (*Withdrawal*, 1974; *Down the Corner*, 1978), and Cathal Black, whose film *Pigs* (1984) brought together a disparate group of wayward outsiders from the margins of Dublin life, have, along with the work of the City Vision group in the 80s, sought to represent working-class Dubliners using a primarily realist aesthetic. That these films did not in general reach an international audience tells us more about the nature of the international film economy than about the films themselves.

What separates productions such as *The Commitments* (and that other acclaimed film about a 'debilitated' and backward Dublin, *My Left Foot*) from indigenous productions is that as a result of depending for finance on sources outside Ireland, crucial decisions about form and content have often been taken from Irish film-makers' control. It is too idealistic to assume that such a minuscule territory as Ireland in the world film market (perhaps as little as 0.5 per cent) can greatly influence scripts and production decisions. Yet a space can exist from time to time in which the worst representational excesses of the Anglo-American film market can be contained, while on other occasions foreign productions can draw more positively on rich and varied aspects of Irish culture, as in *The Playboys*. One way in which this can be achieved is through playing with 'quotation', as, for example, in the use made of *Gone With the Wind* in *The Playboys*.

Towards the end of the film some of the players go to the cinema to see *Gone With the Wind*. Ever-eclectic, the versatile actors decide to recreate scenes from the film in their stage show. The players juxtapose the burning of Atlanta with the scene set many years later where Rhett Butler delivers his infamous last line to Scarlett O'Hara. But the line is misquoted by Tom/Rhett, who has not seen the film: "I don't give a twopenny damn!"

For those concerned with the development of Irish film culture, this scene resonates with bittersweet ironies. (Tom's addition of the amount of money was perhaps a reference to the resources available for an Irish version of the O'Hara's migration story!) In a culture dominated by the literary and the theatrical, this scene is a painful reminder to Irish film-makers and cinema audiences alike of how the word has dominated, and continues to overpower, the visual in Irish cultural life. The way such an Irish cinema void can begin to be filled is through a commitment at a national level to an indigenous Irish cinema. Until then, Ireland will continue to depend for its cinema images on foreign film-makers, not all of whom are as alert to the complexities of Irish culture and society as those who made *The Playboys*.

'The Playboys' opens in London on 5 June and in the rest of the UK on 19 June. The film is reviewed on page 50 of this issue.

Humorous films that tackle questions of S/M, the lesbian sex industry and transsexuality are the trademark of Monika Treut. Julia Knight introduces the German director's work

OFF OUR BACKS

● When Monika Treut's feature film *Virgin Machine*, a humorous lesbian coming-out story, was premiered at the Hof film festival in 1988, Helmut Schoedel, critic for *Die Zeit*, responded with a stinging pronouncement: "Films like Monika Treut's are destroying the cinema". Treut vividly recalls the occasion: "They were walking out after ten minutes, and by the end there was only about one-third of the audience left; no one laughed throughout the film, nobody talked to me afterwards". But Treut is no stranger to such reactions. Her debut feature, *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* (1985), was about sado-masochism. Co-directed with Elfi Mikesch, it was nearly banned in Canada and elicited a chorus of hissing and booing at its Berlin premiere.

Of course, Treut is not the first German director to have provoked such responses. If anything, this negative reception should have signalled her fitness to join the ranks of the New German Cinema's star auteurs, most of whom were repeatedly taken to task in their homeland for their supposed directorial failings. Like Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Herbert Achternbusch and others, Treut has also fallen foul of the country's film subsidy agencies. Yet while her work has quickly attracted champions abroad, in Britain, where the films of Fassbinder, Wenders and Herzog were readily picked up for theatrical distribution and were among the first European films to be given video releases, Treut has been largely ignored apart from a handful of festival screenings.

In a way this is hardly surprising, given the long list of talented German women directors who have failed to break into the British market. As the 'Women and the New German Cinema' season currently running at London's Goethe Institute demonstrates, Germany – unlike Britain – is not short of female directors. But the plethora of literature on the New German Cinema that began to emerge at the end of the 70s focuses almost exclusively on a small number of male film-makers, completely marginalising established women directors such as Margarethe von Trotta, Helma Sanders-Brahms and Ulrike Ottinger. Few films by German women have been given cinema releases in the UK, while video releases are virtually unheard of. Even after the critical acclaim heaped on Doris Dörrie's *Men* (1985), none of her subsequent films has reached British cinemas. (The video release of her *Me and Him*, 1987, is a rare – some would say unfortunate – exception.) And despite her international reputation, even Margarethe von Trotta failed to secure a British distributor for her latest film.

The reasons for this neglect are complex, but a major factor has been the narrow auteurist approach that dominated discussions of the New German Cinema at the peak of its popularity. For a number of years, Fassbinder, Wenders, Herzog and one or two of the other male

directors effectively came to constitute the new cinema, marginalising, among others, Germany's female directors, who for a variety of reasons did not fit comfortably into the auteur mould. Because of their subject matter – often autobiographical or based on experiences of real-life women – women directors, despite enormous formal differences, tended to be treated as a homogeneous group of 'documentarists and realists' at odds with the artistic vision privileged by auteurism.

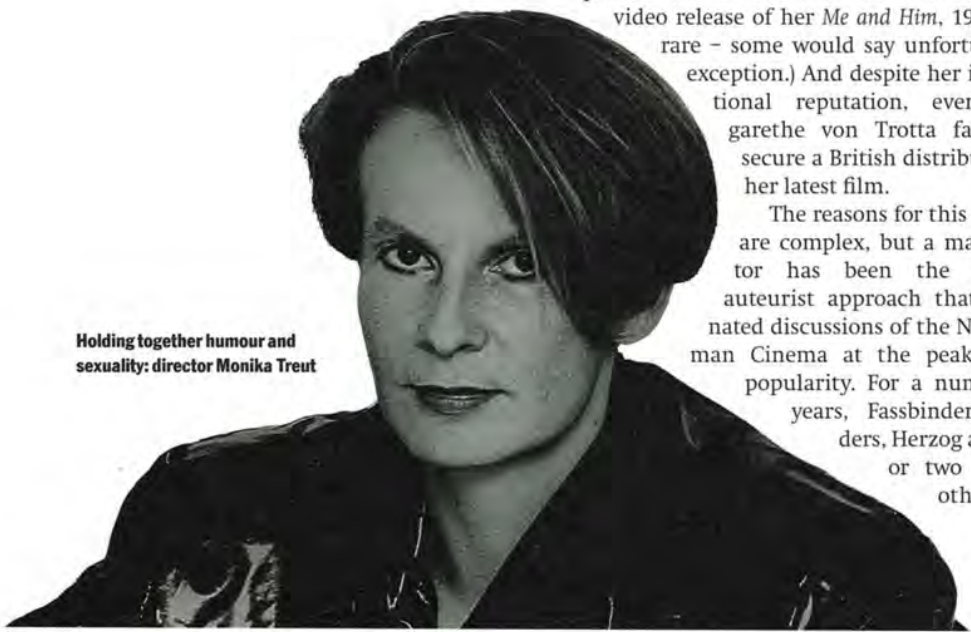
In such circumstances, it would have been remarkable if Monika Treut had not encountered obstacles. And the challenging exploration of sexuality within her films has undoubtedly made it all the more difficult for her to negotiate a foothold in the British market. As Treut herself claims: "It has to do with the Victorian thing... a kind of fear English people have of relating to films and other works with a strong sexual undertone".

Virgin Machine is about a Hamburg journalist, Dorothee (Ina Blum), who is researching a story on romantic love. Dorothee photographs couples, interviews experts, and pursues a relationship with Hans. (The film also hints at a sexual relationship with her brother.) Failing to find what she is looking for in Germany, she departs for San Francisco, where she meets Susie Sexpert, who introduces her to the city's lesbian sex industry. Fascinated by this strange new world, Dorothee goes to all-women strip shows, inspects Susie's dildo collection and tries out a lesbian call-girl service.

Treut's documentary work deals with equally controversial areas of sex and sexuality. In 1983 she made *Bondage*, an interview with a lesbian S/M devotee, *Annie* (1989) documents the career of Annie Sprinkle, who made porn films in the 70s, has worked as a prostitute, and now gives porn postmodernist performances for the sexual "underground". Earlier this year, Treut completed *Max*, a story of a female-to-male transsexual. The films are to be released, together with a fourth about controversial US academic Camille Paglia, as a feature-length programme under the somewhat tongue-in-cheek title, *Female Misbehaviour*.

Treut has hardly been the only German director to confront questions of sexuality; although usually less direct in his approach, Fassbinder inevitably springs to mind. But entry into British cinema culture has been difficult for Treut not only as a woman director, but as a lesbian film-maker. Although lesbian films such as Alexandra von Grote's *Novembermoon* (1984) or Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts* (1985) have been given cinema releases here, lesbian work has not been accepted as part of British film culture to the same extent as films by gay male directors. To take two recent examples, both Derek Jarman's *Edward II* and Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels* merited Barry Norman's attention on television and warranted substantial coverage in *Sight and Sound*. This is obviously in part due to the relatively high profile achieved by gay men generally, whereas lesbians have remained largely invisible. And the virtual absence of women feature film directors in the UK has meant that there are no lesbian directors in a position to speak out for

Holding together humour and sexuality: director Monika Treut



their work. The result has been a lack of sustained engagement with and promotion of lesbian film-making within more mainstream film culture. Anything more challenging than the romantic love stories of von Grote and Deitch has had difficulty finding an outlet other than at isolated screenings or lesbian and gay film festivals.

There are also important differences between the ways Treut and Fassbinder deal with 'deviant' sexuality. Whereas Fassbinder invariably constructed his protagonists as victims of an impersonal society, Treut represents her characters as having exercised a sexual choice and assumed control of their lives. Thus in *Virgin Machine*, she represents Dorothee as investigating and assessing various possibilities before finally opting for a lesbian sexuality. In contrast to other feminist and/or lesbian filmmakers who have deconstructed mainstream cinema's representations of female sexuality or tried to construct 'positive' alternatives, the freedom to choose is the structuring principle of Treut's narratives. What her protagonists choose is almost incidental.

Sexual choice for women is still – despite feminist gains – often considered 'transgressive', something Treut acknowledges in the title of her documentary series, *Female Misbehaviour*. And the choices Treut explores are in themselves transgressive and controversial, if not taboo. *Virgin Machine's* investigation of the lesbian sex industry flies in the face of the vociferous anti-pornography campaigns launched by feminist activists such as Andrea Dworkin and her German counterpart, Alice Schwarzer. According to Dworkin, pornography "requires the brutalisation of women" and there is no qualitative difference between straight and lesbian (or gay) porn. Dworkin regards images such as photographer Della Grace's photographs of S/M lesbians or Jill Posner's work for the US lesbian erotica magazine *On Our Backs* as "self-hating" and denies any possibility of consent by the women who have been photographed. To anyone who shares Dworkin's views, *Virgin Machine's* humorous approach to its subject matter is entirely inappropriate and unpalatable.

Of course, not all women share these views, and campaigning groups such as Feminists Against Censorship in the UK and the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force in the US are an important counter-balance. But even awareness of the controversy can influence acquisition and programming decisions. For the small number of independent distributors – COW before its demise, Electric Pictures and Metro Pictures – who have in the past taken the work of European women directors, sensitivity to the Dworkin argument can make Treut's films ideologically problematic, while memories of feminist pickets outside porn cinemas could make financial investment seem a risky venture.

Treut's film-making is transgressive not only in its subject matter, but at a formal level too. She does not so much bend or break with cinematic conventions as mix them all up, using whatever technique seems appropriate. This irreverent approach gives her films an unplanned, meandering feel, leading some



Upending laughter: Annie Sprinkle as herself in the whimsical comedy, 'My Father Is Coming', top; Susie Bright (right) picks out her favourite dildoes in 'Virgin Machine', above

critics to liken them (in no way disparagingly) to home movies. *Virgin Machine*, for instance, is narrative-based, but the camerawork and editing during the first half have more in common with avant-garde cinema. Filmed in black and white, there are moments where the lighting and framing of Ina Blum's strong-featured face are reminiscent of Weimar cinema. However, once the film moves to San Francisco, Treut cuts joltingly from her fictional narrative to Susie Sexpert talking direct to camera, as if being interviewed. Treut delights in incorporating real-life women into her fictional stories, and the character of Susie Sexpert is based on and played by Susie Bright, safe-sex educator and editor of *On Our Backs*. Treut's most recent film, *My Father Is Coming* (1991), features Annie Sprinkle as herself.

But perhaps Treut's most unforgivable transgression is to arouse expectations of sexual explicitness that are not fulfilled. The titles of all her films are sexually suggestive, as are the posters that advertise them. *My Father Is Coming* is a whimsical comedy about Vicky, an aspiring actress working in New York who receives a visit from her narrow-minded Bavarian father, Hans. Perfectly complementing the double-entendre of the title, the poster is reminiscent of a

porn magazine cover – Annie Sprinkle is presented in close-up, her pendulous breasts bared, leaning over the eager face of a prostrate Hans. A similar shot occurs in the film, but just as Annie is about to satisfy Hans' desire, the camera pans away. Despite her preoccupation with sexuality, Treut rarely shows sex or nudity in her films.

All this begs the question of who her films are aimed at and how appropriate the 'lesbian' film-maker label is. Her choice of subject matter and inclusion of cult figures such as Susie Bright and Annie Sprinkle tend to suggest that her work is aimed at a lesbian subculture. But Treut has angered some lesbians by her failure to deliver the goods in terms of lesbian erotica, while others, looking for romantic love stories, will be equally disappointed. Her films in fact cover a range of sexualities (including both heterosexual and female-to-male transsexual), though her association with porn and S/M may deter a wider audience. In addition, her formal playfulness means that her films have no clear generic identity. All this has the makings of a distributor's nightmare.

Yet as the new lesbian and gay distribution company, Out On A Limb, has recognised, Treut's films do have the potential to appeal to a wide audience. Out On A Limb's director, Val Martin, is planning to release *My Father Is Coming* later this year and believes that Treut's work will do well in Britain because of her humour and positive attitude towards sexuality. Unlike most 'heroines' in mainstream cinema, Treut's protagonists openly enjoy their sexualities without fear of punishment or the need for containment within marriage. This, together with Treut's predilection for "showing very outrageous female characters", creates a strong sense of fun. As a female viewer, irrespective of sexuality or politics, it is difficult to respond unfavourably to images such as Susie Sexpert discussing her dildo collection with Dorothee. As Treut recalls of *Virgin Machine's* premiere at the 1988 Toronto Film Festival: "Some really hard-boiled feminists came to see the film, ready to be angry; by the end, they were laughing and could not hold an anti-porn stance with regard to the film".

But Treut's most important transgression lies in the way she challenges prejudices about sexuality. In direct contrast to mainstream films like *The Silence of the Lambs* or *Basic Instinct*, Treut represents as ordinary those people all too often constructed as deviant. Her 'transgressive' brand of film-making is a much-needed intervention into the arena of sexual politics. If, as Susan Faludi asserts in her new book, *Backlash*, "the last decade has seen a powerful counter-assault on women's rights", Treut's films and her 'misbehaving' women are a vital form of resistance.

'Virgin Machine' will be screened on 2 June at the Edinburgh Film House, and on 9 June at London's Goethe Institute, with the director present, as part of the 'Women and the New German Cinema' film season which runs until 18 June (for details, 071-411 3400). *'My Father Is Coming'* will be screened at the Edinburgh Film House on 11 June and is due for cinema release in the autumn (for details, contact Out On A Limb, 071-498 9643).

Tisch School of the Arts



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Kiss of death

It's 2am. *The Godfather* is on television. A few lines of dialogue, a couple of enigmatic or emphatic gestures – I'm hooked, riveted to the screen, awake until 5am. I've seen it before. That doesn't matter.

Maybe it's Al Pacino's eyes, those sad, lustrous and dog-like eyes that later glow fierce and tough as his character metamorphoses, like coal under the earth's weight and pressure, from soft to hard. Mikey Corleone, sensible, quietly defiant, educated, who's not going to be his father's son, who's not going to enter the family's dirty business (families are dirty business) is transformed into Michael Corleone, an avenging angel/devil, who's driven to wreak justice/havoc by the near-murder of his father, the God/father, Don Corleone, Marlon Brando.

Maybe it's the subtle movement of Brando's massive, padded cheeks and jaw. I may be secretly wishing that the wads of cotton Brando placed inside his mouth – to change his speech and appearance – will tumble out, that he'll begin to drool (he does drool a little during his death scene). I know the cotton won't pop out; I've seen this movie many times (we've all seen the movie before, it's always the same movie, or they're all the same movie).

It's not the wads of cotton. Between you and me, I'm easily seduced by appeals to undying loyalty. I'm in thrall to loyalty's sinister and ineluctable twin, betrayal. Womb to tomb, 'til death do us part, it's the love that dares to speak its name – family and father.

Fatal talk

The Godfather is in the name of the father, the son and the holy ghost. It's a love story, essentially without women, about men, a powerful Oedipal narrative in which if the sons stay close to, and respect, the Father, no one will get hurt. Oedipal fantasies dance from scene to scene, as one by one the sons obey or betray – in the name of the father-auguring salvation, the father's love, or retribution, death.

(The first movie I went to at night was a Russian version of *Romeo and Juliet*. My father took me. I don't remember how it happened that we went alone together, to this movie in particular. We sat close to the screen, the movie house was nearly empty, and both of us cried. I was seven or eight, if memory serves, and if it does, what does it serve?)

Outside, on the street, the dealers have vanished for the night and not even the usual drunks are sitting on the church steps, singing golden oldies. But I'm sure I'm not alone, I'm sure the city is filled with thousands of *Godfather*-watchers who, like me, experience any of its appearances as a second, third or twentieth coming. I sway inwardly to the pulse of cinematic illusion, to the power of a family romance, to the narrative of nation and family, to the mystery of make-believe. Folded into its *mise en scène*, absorbed into its story, I listen as the men talk that fatal talk. Don Corleone huskily whispers to Michael, "Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer". (You

Loyalty, family, fathers and the women of 'The Godfather' seduce novelist Lynne Tillman as she watches Coppola's film – again and again

don't have to be a Mafia *capo* to understand – any paranoid knows he's right.)

Along with its make-believe, what is it I make believe? (*The Godfather* encourages guilty confessions.) A wish for some ultimate authority to relieve me of the burden of conscience, the desire for an unshakeable tradition to which I would belong without question, a longing for an unambivalent relation to the family? My family. In *The Godfather*, of course, ambivalence threads its tortuous way through the projector, laid on to and into the picture as if it were its soundtrack.

Love is the background for hate, hate for love. They exist in immediate relationship to each other, almost as (gun) shot-counter-shot. In *The Godfather Part II*, Michael gives the order to have his brother Fredo, who betrayed him, and the family, killed. The scene of Fredo's death is perfect in its duality, its ambivalence. Coppola cuts from the lake, where Fredo and his assassin are fishing, to Michael standing behind a large plateglass window (he's got the big picture window, the screen, and like us he's also a spectator). In the boat, which is rocking gently, Fredo is praying, but we already know he prays when he fishes – but does he know he's about to be whacked? Cut to Michael at the window, waiting. Cut back to the boat and the lake. Then to Michael. Then to the lake, without the boat. A gunshot. Cut to Michael, his head drops down; to the boat, Fredo's body slumps down.

I can replay that scene again and again in my mind. And I've probably got it wrong, the sequence of shots is most likely different. Fredo's murder was set in motion earlier when Michael vowed to destroy all those who tried to have him killed. "In my bedroom, where my wife sleeps, where my children play". One night, with Michael in earshot, Fredo inadvertently (unconsciously) let slip that he was one of them, but Michael won't revenge himself until their mother dies. La Mamma Mia. Respect. Honour the Family. Even so, Michael gives the order – "He's your brother, Mikey, he's nothing without you" – to have Fredo killed. Murder in the family is a tragedy; killing someone else, the family business.

(As a child I loved watching the family's home movies and used to set up the projec-



Avenger's tragedy: Fredo, left, with Michael

tor and show them to myself over and over. There must be something appealing to me, let's face it, about a passionate family struggle that leads inevitably and tragically to death/murder. Which reminds me of *Rocco and His Brothers*. Is *The Godfather* the American *Rocco and His Brothers*? *Rocco* reminds me of *Romeo and Juliet*, which makes me think of doomed love, doomed families, my father and me...

The first time I saw *The Godfather Part II*, it was playing on Broadway in Times Square. After Michael's wife (Diane Keaton) tells him that the miscarriage he thought she'd had was actually "an abortion, it was an abortion, Michael", he slaps her, hard. Many in the audience – the majority – cheered. I walked out.

Family romance

The Godfather women, an oxymoron? They are mothers, sisters, daughters, wives and mistresses, and nothing else. They are good or bad, saved or discarded. Michael's wife's challenge to his authority – in effect, patriarchy – is the abortion. He throws her out and she becomes a pariah. Given life-in-patriarchy, is *The Godfather*, I wonder, as much a 'woman's picture' as a 'man's picture'?

That kiss of death. Maybe it's that kiss, that absolute articulation of ambivalence, that mortal meeting of mouths, of Eros and Thanatos, that I relish most. What a romance. *Famille fatale*.

The Godfather Part II is on tomorrow night. I'll try to tape it. My obsession gobbles time (in a way, obsession is about time, it uses and makes nothing of time). The thrill is losing myself in it again and again and again. My history in its version of History (the nation's history as one immigrant family's story; *The Godfather* supplies the past also to render its own internal authenticity). My family romance in its Family Romance (my mother warned, "The only people you can count on are your sisters"). Were I still a child (I suppose I am, in a way), I might be hoping that in *The Godfather's* next coming, there'd be a happy ending. Lynne Tillman will be in London in June for readings from the new *Serpent's Tail* anthology, "Serious Hysteries".



Family ties: Marlon Brando as the Godfather

books

The old and the new

Julian Graffy

S. M. Eisenstein Volume 2:

Towards a Theory of Montage

Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (eds), BFI Publishing, £40, 428pp

The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema

Anna Lawton (ed), Routledge, £14.99, 360pp

Glasnost: Soviet Cinema Responds

Nicholas Galichenko, edited by Robert Allington, University of Texas Press, \$25, 142pp

Three new books on Soviet cinema cover between them the period from the revolution to the present day. But readers interested in the Lenin and Stalin years will find more to sustain them than those curious about more recent developments.

The first volume of the BFI's authoritative edition of Eisenstein's writings on film, which appeared in 1988, covered the years 1922-34. The forthcoming third and final volume will deal with 1935-47. Volume two is a collection of Eisenstein's writings on montage between 1937 and 1940, reflecting his response to the appearance of sound film. These materials had not been edited by Eisenstein at the time of his death and the title, necessarily tentative (ignore the word "towards" at your peril), is supplied by the editors. The book is organised into three main sections: on montage in single set-up cinema (largely devoted to the composition of the individual shot); in the multiple set-up cinema of the 20s; and in sound film. Much of the section on sound film will be familiar to English-language readers as *The Film Sense*, edited by Jay Leyda, which first appeared in 1943.

Towards a Theory of Montage is not always an easy read. It is not just that the incompleteness of the various manuscripts has produced frequent repetition; Eisenstein's jackdaw mind swoops down on examples and anecdotes that take his fancy, and elucidatory sequences such as the one devoted to the Bernini *balдахино* in the Vatican are dramatically overextended. These meanderings sometimes make it difficult to follow his argument, or to comprehend its relevance to film montage.

But how widely read and how perceptive the man is. His central thesis about film montage is that it is merely the application in a new medium of a universal artistic method. Hence he reveals montage at work in ancient Greek architecture, in the painting of Serov and Watteau, in the prose of Tolstoy, the poetry of Pushkin and Walt Whitman. And how acute he is about his own films. The passage at the end of *The Film Sense* on the audiovisual montage of a scene in *Alexander Nevsky* is already justly celebrated. This book adds fascinating details to our understanding of *Strike* and *The Battleship Potemkin*, *October* and *The General Line*, as well as the work of his Soviet colleagues, not all of which he admires.

That *Towards a Theory of Montage* is a treasure house to be returned to vindicates the editorial decision to present these writings to the English-language reader at such length. The volume, which contains a wealth of illustrative material including excellent reproductions of Eisenstein's own

drawings and diagrams, is splendidly translated by the late Michael Glenny. It contains two useful introductions, by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and the leading Russian Eisenstein scholar, Naum Kleiman, and a formidable array of elucidatory notes by the indefatigable Richard Taylor, who, above all, deserves our gratitude for a major scholarly achievement.

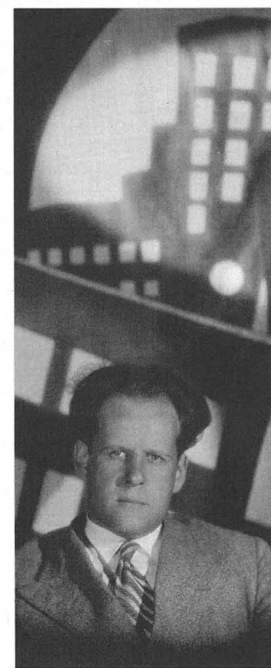
The Red Screen contains twenty articles on aspects of Soviet cinema from the 20s to the present day, most of which were given as papers at a conference held in Washington in September 1986. The passage of five and a half years before the book's publication has not been to its advantage. The first half of *The Red Screen* consists of seven essays by leading American and British film historians covering the period up to the Second World War. The pearl among them, Annette Michelson's reading of Dziga Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin* as iconostasis and funeral chant, is acute and provocative. All the others, on Lev Kuleshov between Constructivism and Hollywood, on Fridrikh Ermler, on Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, on the propaganda films of the Second World War, and on aspects of the organisation of Soviet cinema in the 20s and 30s, are competent and absorbing, although at least two of their authors have already published fuller accounts elsewhere.

A scholarly fault-line separates these pieces from the thirteen shorter essays covering the 50s to the late 80s that make up the second part of *The Red Screen*. Stranded on the wrong side of this divide are Marc Ferro's trenchant discussion of how film and television modify our view of history and a revealing survey of the portrayal of women in recent Soviet cinema. Too often, however, grandiose titles mask studies that dart from film to film without focus or rigour, and too many of these writers seem to imagine that a recipe of plot summaries plus a dose of perfunctory sociology amounts to illuminating film criticism.

It is also here that the material's outdateness is particularly acutely felt, for in the last six years unshackled Russian critics have written with acuity about what is but leadenly glimpsed in these pages. A decision has clearly been taken to extend the compass of the volume by including surveys of the Gorbachev period, but it is a mystery why this was done by means of two previously published short pieces that are disorganised, incoherent and superficial. Considerably better surveys of the cinema of the period already exist (including one by the editor herself). It is presumably the same incompetently effected opportunism that has led the publishers to include, as the volume's only illustrations, stills from six recent films not studied in the book.

Editorial sloppiness is perhaps *The Red Screen*'s gravest shortcoming. Only Françoise Navailh's piece on women's films provides a filmography with the original Russian titles. Otherwise authors are allowed to make their own English translations, with the result that some films make two appearances in the index, each with different page references. The author of the interesting study of *Jazzman* does not see fit to mention either the film's Russian title or its date, its director's name or the name of anyone associated with it; so that no responsibility for it is claimed in the index. This belated homage to 'death of the author' theory

A jackdaw mind: director Sergei Eisenstein in 1930



NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE



RONALD GRANT

Made in hell: Elsa Lanchester and Boris Karloff in 'The Bride of Frankenstein'

seems particularly hard on Karen Shakhnazarov, since through a combination of a similar laxity in the area of transliteration (use your own system) and an astonishing number of misprints, at least four of his fellow directors are included in the index twice (again with two different sets of references). The poor benighted indexer even has separate entries for *Narkompros* (The Commissariat for Enlightenment) and *Markompros* (its misprinted *Doppelgänger*). Why is a reputable press publishing work in this state?

Do not be deceived by the title *Glasnost: Soviet Cinema Responds*. Nicholas Galichenko's book consists of a fifty-five page introductory essay followed by thirty-three directorial filmographies. The essay draws mainly upon films seen and interviews carried out during a visit to Moscow in 1987. It discusses six films of 1986 and two others which were made earlier but then shelved. While this material is sometimes interesting, it is perversely organised so as to create maximum dislocation and repetition. It is intercut with an incoherent account of the organisational changes in Soviet cinema of 1986 and stray *aperçus* about Soviet history and politics. The tone is naively enthusiastic, superficial and frequently platitudinous.

The filmography section, entitled 'Directors of *Glasnost*', takes the form of lists of directors' films followed by a brief discussion of a single work or the outline of a career. Formal constraints make this material more disciplined, and there are some interesting entries, including those on

Georgy Danelia, Irakli Kvirikadze, Kira Muratova and Eldar Riazanov. But these are not the directors of *glasnost*. Of the thirty-three, twenty-six made their first films between the 50s and the 70s and fourteen have no film listed after 1986. One, Larisa Shepitko, died in 1979. Some, such as Muratova, Aleksandr Askoldov and Aleksandr Sokurov, merit entry since their important work reached the public only through the endeavours of the unshelving committee set up in 1986. But only seven of them began their careers in the 80s.

Most of this section of the book was obviously written some time ago. Detailed discussion (with the exception of Vasily Pichul's *Little Vera* and Sergei Solov'ev's *Assa* of 1988) stops at 1987. The lists add fourteen films of 1988-89 and one of 1990. Too many of the important films of the *glasnost* period and too many of the important new directors just do not appear. The best feature of *Glasnost - Soviet Cinema Responds* is its twenty full-page illustrations of stills and posters. Other surveys of the last years of Soviet cinema have been announced. For the time being, hold on to your money.

Horror show

Kim Newman

Horror Film Directors, 1931-1990

Dennis Fischer, McFarland & Company, £56.25, 877pp

The functional title of this 877-page tome is symptomatic of the dilemma underlying

Dennis Fischer's mammoth task in subdividing his fairly definitive account of the broad church of horror into a hundred or so essays on directors. Half the careers included deserve 'major director' status in Fischer's canon and are rewarded with lengthy and substantial profiles; the rest receive thumbnail treatment under the sub-title 'The Hopeless and the Hopeful: Promising Directors, Obscurities, and Horror Hacks'. The inevitable tension between genre criticism and an auteur approach surfaces in the introduction, which offers a rough history of the horror genre as if it were a sea of the unconscious over which a few enlightened, megaphone-wielding souls occasionally surf.

Fischer suggests that horror became a discrete genre in the early days of sound, when *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (both 1931) defined the form. My own notion is that the point of coalescence occurred some time later with *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Dracula's Daughter* (1936). These sequels built on the 'isolated cases' of early 30s horror movies, all of which grew out of different genres, ranging from literary adaptation (*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 1931), through jungle adventure (*Island of Lost Souls*, 1932) to old-dark-house mystery (*The Old Dark House*, 1932). An epidemic took shape which could be clearly diagnosed, repetition and elaboration being the keys to transforming one-offs into a trend.

After profiling all the obvious and many of the unlikely candidates for the mantle of the book's title, Fischer resorts to an appendix which examines 'Classic Horror Films by Non-Horror Directors'. Here he reiterates the commonly held idea that the best (that is, the most frightening, most interesting, most successful, most relevant) horror movies are made by the directors unconcerned with carving out a career as horror film-makers. Which is to say that they'd rather be Stanley Kubrick, Michael Curtiz, Rouben Mamoulian or William Friedkin than George A. Romero, Dario Argento, Wes Craven or Larry Cohen. A circle of hell is thus created for those like Brian De Palma or Robert Florey, who might aspire to the former category while being sucked into the latter. Sadly, Fischer never quite gets to grips with the question of whether a single-minded career in horror has the same status as one or two atypical achievements in the work of more profligate film-makers, and this postscript feels like an attempt to cram in a few personal favourites which might otherwise have been excluded.

The book's remit does not allow it to assess the vital contributions of screenwriters (Richard Matheson and Robert Bloch, for example), and Fischer has to do the usual hop, skip and jump to cover producer Val Lewton, who is included by virtue of his director protégés. The iconographic status of the genre's performers (Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, Vincent Price, George Zucco, Dwight Frye *et al*) is nowhere addressed, nor is the fact that recently the likes of David Cronenberg and Clive Barker have become as well known in relation to their own category as Hitchcock was to suspense or Disney to the family film.

The debatable merits of his pantheon-building approach aside, the fact that Fischer has gone to such extraordinary lengths to construct this book renders it both valid and illuminating. The filmo- ►

graphies are useful if sometimes sketchy (the television coverage is spotty) and there are critical-biographical essays on everyone from Dario Argento to Jean Yarbrough (who qualifies as one of the major talents, although Fischer is perhaps too dismissive of such interesting oddments as *King of the Zombies*, 1941, and *The Creeper*, 1948). Interview material is woven into the essays if it happens to be at hand, and Fischer does his best to be as interested in Ulli Lommel, Don Sharp and Edgar G. Ulmer as in Terence Fisher, John Carpenter and James Whale.

There is a hint of the fanzine plod about the coverage of the more familiar directors and, inevitably, there are odd decisions about who deserves an entry (John Hough but not John Llewellyn Moxey, Amando de Ossorio but not Riccardo Freda). Nevertheless, Fischer manages to erect a vast framework upon which it is just possible to stretch the skin of the horror movie. The question which remains unasked is whether horror counts as a true genre (like the Western, for example) or is rather a specific reaction (like humour) that can be provoked by any number of sub-generic approaches. By this token, Akira Kurosawa belongs here along with Inoshiro Honda, and Ingmar Bergman is as worthy of horror-auteur treatment as Curtis Harrington.

Finding the enemy

Sharon Willis

Feminism Without Women:

Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age
Tania Modleski, Routledge, £30, 188pp

Tania Modleski's provocative and timely book examines parallel trends in popular culture and cultural theory which recognise the force of feminism only in order to accommodate and diffuse it, appropriating feminist vocabulary and strategies in ways that reinforce patriarchal power. Recent feminist debates, Modleski argues, collude in popular culture's tendency to replace gender specificity with gender ambiguity. Academic theory encourages the view that feminism and women's studies are a preliminary stage in the evolution of a new discipline: 'gender studies'. In our eagerness to undo connotations of sex and gender, we feminists have sometimes abandoned our central organising category – women. As a result, Modleski warns, we run the unacceptable political risk of "presiding over [our] own marginalisation".

Modleski urges us to acknowledge these post-feminist impulses even in the most fascinating, resistant, or ambivalent popular and theoretical texts, and even, or especially, where we claim our own authority and our own pleasures as readers. This task demands that we decide the political meanings of what we read and Modleski's own readings challenge a common tendency to celebrate the impossibility of fixing meaning in popular representations. One of this book's strengths is its implicit insistence on modifying the claim that none of us is the dupe of our culture. While it is probably true that no one is always and everywhere such a dupe, this does not mean that anyone entirely escapes the possibility of being duped, by specific objects, at specific moments, and in specific contexts.

Feminism Without Women takes as its

utopian horizon "a female 'fellowship' in which women speak freely to and of one another", the promise of a "feminist critique" that would promote dialogue across differences between women by maintaining gender as the primary locus for organising feminist politics and exchange. At times, however, Modleski's readings expose an anxiety about our own political trustworthiness that haunts the promise to bring feminism back to women. 'Masculinity and Male Feminism', the structural centre of the book, offers its strongest and most disturbing arguments in pointed criticisms of masculine alliances with feminism and of feminist fascination with figures of masculinity, a fascination that abets masculine appropriations of feminist political gains.

Many recent popular representations (*Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, *Three Men and a Baby*) celebrate male regressiveness, Modleski argues. That regressiveness, often expressed as masochism, coincides with feminist theorists' tendency to accept our marginalisation by men who appear disempowered, sexually ambiguous or feminised. While Modleski is right to argue that such representations may reinforce existing power structures rather than indicate progressive shifts within them, it seems equally important to remember that representations have specific relationships with those structures. To read all examples as signs of the same thing – "arrested" masculine "development" – is to put feminism in the position of maternal law, policing thought, sex, fantasy or the body, a position that Modleski would urge us to resist.

Confronting the necessity of struggle and contradiction within feminism, this book becomes most telling when it exposes the difficulty we have in separating political conflict from private psychological aggression. Since it structures its analysis around the clear identification of friends and foes, allies and enemies, on the 'inside' as well as the 'outside' of feminism, it reaches a point where it might claim as its own the underlying message it attributes to Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*: "We have met the enemy and she is us". *Feminism Without Women* implicitly challenges us to acknowledge and to analyse the aggression that is symptomatic of feminist debates, so that we do not become our own worst enemies.

History Italian-style

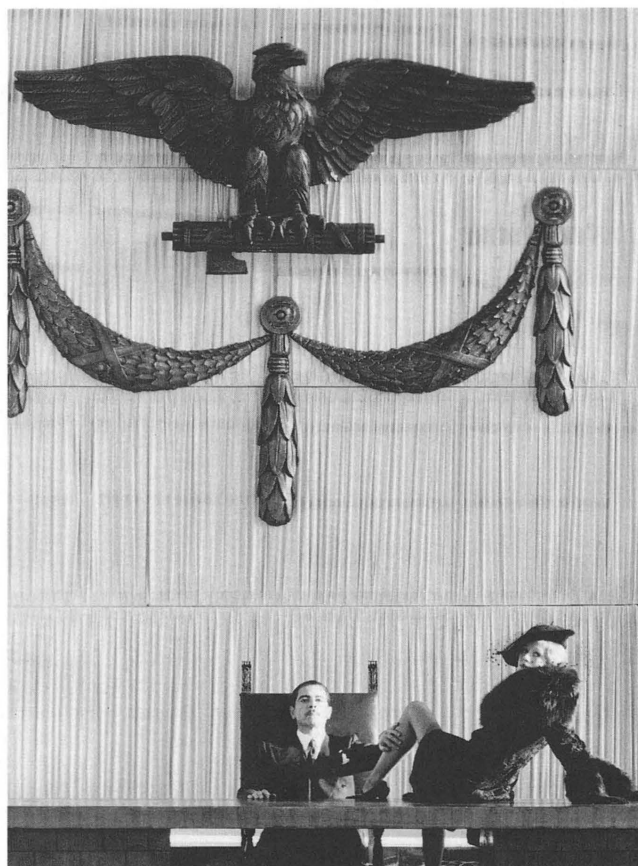
Christopher Wagstaff

The Body in the Mirror:

Shapes of History in Italian Cinema

Angela Dalle Vacche, Princeton University Press, £14.95, 306pp

History and cinema can be combined in various ways. There are histories of cinema, history in cinema, or history as cinema. Angela Dalle Vacche's ambitious and rewarding book attempts to integrate them all – not greedily, but in principle: "nouvelle histoire, Italian-style", she half-jokingly calls it. She focuses on gesture, performance and the body – which are, after all, what cinema mostly films – building around a painstaking analysis of these elements an interpretation of the way Italian cinema represents the nation's view of its own history. The very notion of a 'national cinema' implies the homogenisation of class, regional and sex-



Historical differences:
Dominique Sanda in
Bertolucci's compelling critique
of anti-fascism, *'The Conformist'*

ual differences. The last of these, sexual difference, is "the deepest layer" of Dalle Vacche's study.

She takes from Italian thinkers ideas about national unity and historical continuity and finds them embedded in films both before and after the Second World War. From 1968 onwards, however, national unity is revealed as illusory, and historical continuity is challenged by an Oedipal conflict between fathers and sons, as in Bernardo Bertolucci's critique of anti-fascism in *The Conformist* and *The Spider's Stratagem* (both 1970). Italian cinema oscillates between the operatic treatment of large-scale historical events and the small details of everyday life projected through comedy, particularly through the athletic body characteristic of the *commedia dell'arte*. In the case of neo-realism, the bodies of the non-professional actors express historical forces, while in the operatic forms found on either side of the neo-realist movement, the bodies of the performers and of the characters they represent have the fixity of statues.

Fascism is discussed via a comparison of two films about Italy's classical past, Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) and Carmine Gallone's *Scipio Africanus* (1937). *Cabiria* is seen as the expression of an attempt to efface differences in Italian political life under the statesman Giolitti, in which the actor Maciste displays the body's capacity for the revolutionary movement which early fascism contained. The *Scipio* of Gallone's film, on the other hand, is seen as representing the bureaucratic fixity of the fascist regime's view of the nation, in which continuity with Rome is asserted by means of a recourse to kitsch antiquity. One can be mightily impressed by these pages, and still wonder whether *Cabiria* really is Giolittian. The post-'68 analysis is carried by *The Conformist*, in which the author looks at Bertolucci's representation of conformism

in the light of Althusser's explanation of how ideology is transmitted.

The *Risorgimento* (Italian unification) is the subject of the next major comparison, between Alessandro Blasetti's *1860* (1933) and Luchino Visconti's *Senso* (1954), the latter also contrasted with the Taviani brothers' 'remake', *Allonsanfàn* (1974). The author looks in some detail at the influence of the Tuscan *macchiaioli* painters on Blasetti's *mise en scène*, while in *Senso* the weight of her analysis bears most powerfully on the melodramatic features and sexual politics of the film. The Resistance is covered by Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946) and the Taviani brothers' *La notte di San Lorenzo* (1982), as well as by Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem*, in which Dalle Vacche sees women feared and excluded.

There are moments when the mind boggles. This is no light read, and you need to be something of an Italianist to keep up, but it provides challenging answers to the question of a film's relation to the history of which it is a part. One of the dangers of Dalle Vacche's argument is that it tends to go round in circles, demonstrating that narrative cinema feeds on stereotypes. But her analyses – of sexuality, political in Visconti, ideological in Bertolucci, and of the acting styles of the silent cinema, for example – drive the book forward.

French connections

Ginette Vincendeau

Republic of Images:

A History of French Film-making

Alan Williams, Harvard University Press, £39.95, 458pp

The publication of a new, single-volume English-language history of French cinema is welcome in this surprisingly underwritten field, where the only serious contender is Roy Armes' *French Cinema* (1985). *Republic of Images* covers the time span from pre-cinema inventions to the late 80s with uneven emphasis: the first two thirty-year slices of the century are given more than 150 pages each, while the last three decades are dealt with in fifty pages, many of which are about the 60s. The book is clearly written, well-edited (though sparsely illustrated), and on the whole the spelling of French expressions and film titles is refreshingly accurate.

Williams, an American academic known for his work on Max Ophuls, is upfront about his methodology, announcing that he will concentrate on "works that have attempted to go beyond the purely commercial goal of selling a little pleasure to cinema audiences". He is also honest about his selective reading (though this renders his bibliography of limited use). He remains unabashed, too, about his Americanocentrism: the films studied are those available in the US, though the fact that this represents only a tiny proportion of French output is not sufficiently acknowledged, and no statistics are provided. In the tradition of French historian Georges Sadoul (one of his major references) and many after him, Williams' history weaves together biographies of 'major' film-makers (understood as directors, occasionally scriptwriters, but not stars or cinematographers) and analyses of their critically sanctioned output. The

relevance of some of the biographical information is obscure; for example the class and religious backgrounds of film-makers – and even of their parents – are emphasised, but what this tells us about the films is not explained.

Republic of Images thus discusses the classical French canon – Feuillade to Renoir, Ophuls to Truffaut and Godard – with few surprises, though Williams enlarges it a little. It is good to see, at last, some recognition of the work of Pierre Chenal and Marie Epstein in this type of survey. There is also a welcome new look at examples of silent film *d'art*, more attention than usual to Ophuls, including his 30s films, as well as perceptive analyses of some 40s and 50s costume dramas. Elsewhere, however, the shortcomings of the auteur approach to film history weaken the argument. Stylistic points about directors are of limited value when not placed within a wider context. For instance, the familiar praise of Renoir's camerawork and "respect" for actors ignores the fact that many other French directors at that time used similar techniques. Since there is already so much work on Renoir, we could do with a sharper enquiry into his specificity.

Though popular genres are not the object of Williams' investigation, and clearly have not been extensively viewed, value judgments are made ("the general mediocrity of *cinéma du sam'di soir*", "escapist fare") which leave the reader wondering what these remarks are based on. And the chapters on the post-war period suffer from the absence of any account of the two most significant genres: comedy and the thriller. (This is partly a result of over-reliance on François Truffaut's definition of mainstream French cinema as costume film and *noir* psychological drama, which was partially true when he wrote in 1954, but not so later.) Consequently, though Jacques Becker is discussed in the Renoir lineage, his epoch-making *policier*, *Touchez pas au grisbi* (1954) is not mentioned. But most inadequate is the short section devoted to 80s cinema, which brackets together under the "television generation" directors as different as Bertrand Tavernier, Nelly Kaplan, Catherine Breillat, Maurice Pialat and Diane Kurys, and ignores the vitality of films which combine popular narratives with socio-political issues – the French North African *cinéma beur*, for instance.

Williams' closing statement that "It is entirely possible that in the not-too-distant future, the story of French cinema will have effectively come to an end" will come as a surprise to any reader who is in touch with contemporary French film production and film culture. So will the assertion that "Spoken language may soon become virtually the only truly distinctive trait of the French commercial mainstream". The one example given to support this claim, Coline Serreau's *Trois hommes et un couffin*, is in fact significantly different from its US remake *Three Men and a Baby* in its language, decor, camerawork, narrative, editing pace, and the star treatment of the male leads.

Williams' love of French art cinema shows in his book. It is a pity that he allows his admiration to blind him to the specificity – and sometimes even existence – of the rest of French cinema. Despite its promising title, *Republic of Images* remains an elitist version of French film history.

Shorts

Bette Davis: A Biography

Barbara Leaming, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £17.99, 327pp

● Yet another biography of 'Battling Bette'. Leaming celebrates the feisty image of the uncompromising actress who inspired US audiences during the Depression-ridden 30s and war-torn 40s, and who stood up to the studio bosses in a bid for autonomy. The book includes Davis' stage, film and television credits and a selected bibliography.

Celluloid Sisters: Women and Popular Cinema

● Janet Thumim, Macmillan, £14.99, 247pp

Thumim discusses changing definitions of femininity in box office successes from *Brief Encounter* and *Doctor at Sea* to *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Searchers*, concentrating on films shown in Britain between 1945 and 1965. She stresses the negative, repressive aspects of these depictions of women, asking how it is that they were nevertheless extremely popular with female audiences.

Scandinavian Cinema:

A Survey of Films and Film-makers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

Peter Cowie et al, Tantivy Press, £14.50, 288pp

● Cowie's introduction to this strikingly illustrated volume emphasises the cultural links between the five Nordic countries, tracing the similarities between their music, painting and cinema. A useful chronology by Françoise Buquet covering 1896 to 1991 makes connections between political events and developments in cinema, and the book also includes an impressive general filmography (1910-91), a dictionary of directors and a bibliography.

Epic Films: Casts, Credits and Commentary on Over 250 Historical Spectacle Movies

Gary A. Smith, McFarland & Company, £26.25, 294pp

● Smith outlines the history of one of the most spectacular, popular and critically underrated genres, from the two-reel silent *Ben-Hur* to Steve Reeves' success as Hercules



in 1959, above, which initiated a European wave of shoestring sword and sandal pot-boilers. Sadly, he never gets to grips with the bizarre appeal of the muscle-bound heroes populating the movies.

Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History

Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, Harvard University Press, £23.95, 306pp

● Dayan and Katz look at the way television treats public spectacles such as the Olympic Games, the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, the moon landing, and John F. Kennedy's funeral. They argue that the living-room celebration of these events is a unique form of ceremonial experience – different from, but as powerful as, the experience of 'being there' – which has the potential for transforming societies.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

The Adjuster

Canada 1991

Director: Atom Egoyan

Certificate
18

Distributor
Metro Pictures
Production Company
Ego Film Arts
With the assistance of Téléfilm Canada/
The Ontario Film Development Corporation
Producer
Atom Egoyan
Co-producer
Camelia Frieberg
Associate Producer
David Webb
Production Co-ordinator
Robert J. Pazdro
Production Manager
Camelia Frieberg
Unit Manager
Stephen Turnbull
Location Manager
Richard Craven
Casting
Extras:
Scott Mansfield
Assistant Directors
David Webb
Cynthia Gillespie
Ingrid Veninger
Screenplay
Atom Egoyan
Director of Photography
Paul Sarossy
In colour
2nd Unit Photography
Mark Willis
Editor
Susan Shipton
Production Designers
Linda Del Rosario
Richard Paris
Set Decorators
Richard Paris
Linda Del Rosario
Scenic Artist
Fred Fitzpatrick
Muralist
Elizabeth Bailey
Billboard Painters
Chris Minz
Ana Aum
Elizabeth Bailey
Fred Fitzpatrick
Special Effects
Northern Effects
Music
Mychael Danna
Music Performed by
Piano:
Eve Egoyan
Violin:
Mark Fewer
Duduk Sample:
Djivan Gasparian
Costume Design
Maya Mani
Wardrobe
Jill Aslin

Make-up Artist
Nicole Demers
Title Design
Greg Van Alstyne
Titles/Opticals
Film Opticals of Canada
Sound Design
Steven Munro
Sound Editor
Dialogue:
Sue Conley
ADR Editor
Michael Werth
Sound Recordists
Ross Redfern
Foley:
George Novotny
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Daniel Pellerin
Peter Kelly
Foley Artist
Sid Lieberman
Production Assistants
Lori Dunn
Mark Jackson
Jordan Merkur
Allen Khan
Kim Nelson

Cast
Elias Koteas
Noah Render
Arsinée Khanjian
Hera Render
Maury Chaykin
Bubba
Gabrielle Rose
Mimi
Jennifer Dale
Arianne
David Hemblen
Bert
Rose Sarkisyan
Seta
Armen Kokorian
Simon Render
Jacqueline Samuda
Louise
Gerard Parkes
Tim
Patricia Collins
Lorraine
Don McKellar
Tyler
John Gilbert
Doctor
Stephen Ouimette
Larry
Raoul Trujillo
Mathew
Tony Nardi
Motel Manager
Paul Bettis
Wild Man of the Billboards
Frank Jefferson
Simon as a baby

9,196 feet
102 minutes

Noah Render, an insurance loss adjuster, lives in the only occupied house on an uncompleted estate with Hera, her sister Seta and their son Simon. Called out to the scenes of fires, he arranges for clients to be lodged in a motel while they wait for their claims to be sorted. On the subway, Hera witnesses an incident involving Bubba and Mimi, a rich couple who stage elaborate sex charades for Mimi to star in. Hera works as a film censor, classifying acts in pornographic films and videotaping them for Seta to watch at home.

At the the motel, Noah reassures an anxious client Tim, with whose wife he is having an affair. He also embarks on

an affair with his latest client Arianne, who has allowed her house to burn down because "something had to change". Bubba visits the Renders posing as a location scout and persuades them to allow him to use their house for filming.

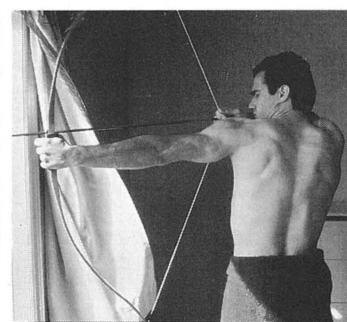
Hera is caught videotaping by Tyler, a young censor, who reports her to their boss Bert. The latter is delighted to hear that Hera shares their excitement at watching the films, but is disappointed when she explains that she does it so that Seta can learn about her work. Noah suggests that the family move to the motel while the 'film crew' use the house. Bubba and Mimi move into the house to film a sex scene in which she plays a mother at a children's party.

During a private screening arranged by Bert, Hera allows Tyler to fondle her. While Noah is in the bedroom of Mathew, a gay client, Hera, Seta and Simon leave. Driving home to look for them, Noah finds Bubba dousing the house in paraffin before setting it alight. As the house burns down, Noah remembers meeting Hera for the first time, as her house was burning...

In the past, Atom Egoyan seemed to have one thing to say and a number of elegantly complex ways to say it. Dispensing with the more mannered aspects of his earlier features, and adopting a more downbeat realism in his visual tone, Egoyan here manages to spread his thematic net considerably wider. His main insight has always been a fairly conventional one - into urban alienation in the video age, and into the aridity of interpersonal relationships entailed by the arrangement of the world into categories and representations.

In *Family Viewing* and *Speaking Parts*, the point was overstressed with a rather too insistent interplay of film and video media. Here he jettisons that device - so much so that, even though film and TV are omnipresent, we only hear their soundtracks, whether the banal jingles of children's TV or the all too eloquent grunts and gobbles of hard porn. Instead of television *per se*, Egoyan shows us TV-style spectacle enacted in the real world, like the sexual performance art staged by Bubba for Mimi's benefit (unless it is the other way round).

Noah's social role is one such spectacle: he could be the friendly insurance man in a TV ad, or at least tries to play the part. He is an adjuster before he is Hera's 'husband', and their relationship is strained all the more because Hera herself is not satisfied with the constraints of her job description. As a sexual being, she finds that looking is not enough; an exchange of glances on the subway with a dashing chiropodist has to turn into direct physical contact, if only between his fingers and her feet. Noah's sexuality, on the other hand, is subsumed entirely into his role as consoler of fire victims, and if he embarks on affairs with them, we can only suppose that it is as an extension of his good services.



Errant Eros: Elias Koteas

The film's dislocation - very short scenes, implied relations between characters that only become clearer as the film proceeds - traditionally goes hand in hand with themes of alienation. But Egoyan's particular achievement here is to hint at the possibility of some underlying order beneath the fragmentation. Noah, who is at least a semi-benevolent manipulator, is seen by his clients as an angel of infinite goodwill, ensuring them a continuity of life even after disaster has struck. His counterpart among the censors is Bert, who sits in the screening room like an impassible god, guaranteeing the possibility of sexual pleasure by reducing it, classifying by letter the manifestations of its excesses ("No Gs", he says after one film, "surprising").

The Adjuster works brilliantly as a layering of repetitions and parallelisms. Egoyan rings his characteristic changes on the theme of voyeurism - Seta watching porn in order to experience Hera's life at one remove; a passing masturbator watching her watching; Hera seeing Mimi's exhibitionistic subway charade; Bubba taking photos of a pornographer's most perverse delight, the spectacle of the 'happy home'. The repetition works, too, at the level of the way people keep a record of their lives, most simply in the photographs which enable Noah to value their life style. The point that the photos establish the life, rather than vice versa, is neatly made when Mathew's naked body on the bed - after he and Noah have presumably slept together - duplicates a pose in the portraits he had shown Noah previously.

Egoyan is often accused of not having real characters, but that is precisely the point. 'Real' life, 'inner' life, is only alluded to here through its absence, which shows as a glaring void behind the characters' neurotic manoeuvres and empty verbal equivocations. In this sense, two touches of performance stand out - the tension between Elias Koteas' twitching, panicked features and the codified banalities he speaks; and the telling scene in which Bubba, explaining the 'film' he is about to make, ends up desperately communicating his own impasse as a character in a film - in this film, in fact. The film's self-reflexivity points towards a rather desperate moral realisation - Egoyan's characters may be just characters in a movie, but they also know with increasing anxiety that they can never be characters in that elusive domain, the real.

Jonathan Romney

Broadway Bound

USA 1991

Director: Paul Bogart

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Blue Dolphin
Production Company
ABC Productions
Executive Producers
Michael Brandman
Emanuel Azenberg
Producer
Terry Nelson
Production Supervisor
Jim Painten
Production Co-ordinator
Mark Ross Michaels
Unit Production Manager
Valley Via Reseigne
Casting
Karen Hendel
Assistant Directors
Cheryl Downey
Susan Norton
Screenplay
Neil Simon
Based on his own play
Director of Photography
Isidore Mankofsky
In colour
Camera Operator
Case Hotchkiss
Editor
Andy Zall
Production Designer
Ben Edwards
Art Director
Richard Johnson
Set Decorator
Sharon Bonney
Special Effects
John K. Stirber

Music
David Shire
Music Editor
Lori Slomka
Costume Design
Rita Riggs
Make-up
Deborah Larson
Sound Editor
Jill Bowers
Sound Recordist
Michael Moore
Sound Re-recordists
David Fluhr
Ross Davis

Cast
Anne Bancroft
Kate Jerome
Hume Cronyn
Ben
Corey Parker
Eugene Morris Jerome
Jonathan Silverman
Stan Jerome
Jerry Orbach
Jack Jerome
Michele Lee
Blanche
Marilyn Cooper
Mrs Pitkin
Pat McCormick
Announcer
Jack Carter
Chubby Waters

8,421 feet
94 minutes

Eugene Morris Jerome, a successful Broadway writer, reminisces about his early life in Brighton Beach on the outskirts of New York. It is the 40s, he is twenty-two years old, living at home and working in the stockroom of a department store. His brother Stan, two years older, makes a living selling men's clothes, but shares Eugene's ambition to be a writer. Three generations of the family occupy a small, cramped house where everybody overhears everybody else's business. Apart from the brothers, there is Eugene's grandfather, Ben, a Trotskyist in his late seventies who constantly resists his daughters' pressure to join his estranged wife in retirement in Florida. There is Eugene's mother, Kate, who has devoted her life to keeping the family going. And there is his father, Jack, a disenchanted businessman in the garment industry.

One evening, Stan arrives home in a state of great excitement. He has arranged to show a script to a producer at CBS radio the next day. He drags his brother upstairs for an all-night writing session. Their work is interrupted by their grandfather, who can't sleep, and by their parents, who argue about a woman Jack has been seeing. The brothers retire to the basement to continue writing. Miraculously, the script is accepted and some weeks later it is broadcast. The family gathers by the wireless. It soon becomes apparent that Stan and Eugene have based their material on their domestic surroundings. Their father is deeply offended and worried that he will lose face with the neighbours. The brothers, though,

are bitter about his behaviour towards their mother. Eventually, Jack packs his bags and leaves. Stan and Eugene secure a contract to write for *The Phil Silvers Show*, lease an apartment downtown and move away from Brighton Beach. Eugene's voice-over tells us that Ben has reluctantly joined his invalid wife in Florida, Jack has remarried and now has another family. Kate is the only one left at the Brighton Beach home.

Bard of Broadway Neil Simon is an old hand at transforming memories of childhood, adolescence and marital life into well-crafted middlebrow comedies. In *Broadway Bound*, third in an autobiographical sequence which began with *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and continued with *Biloxi Blues*, he examines his own genesis as a writer. The opening voice-over invokes Thomas Wolfe, but Simon's excoriation of the past is very different from the rambling, epic essays in narcissism and nostalgia of *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Of Time and the River*. Simon is a miniaturist, assiduously trawling through his memories in search of tiny nuggets of comedy.

There is a sense of Chinese boxes about a project in which a comedy writer writes a comedy about a comedy writer trying to write comedy sketches. Simon's plays and screenplays are firmly rooted in a New York tradition which isn't always easy to catch or warm to. Just as Alan Ayckbourn's work has a rocky passage across the Atlantic, Simon's vehicles tend to do less well in Britain than the US. However, despite its Broadway origins and its occasional mawkishness, *Broadway Bound* is an affecting and sometimes funny portrait of the Jewish comedy writer as a young man. For this, Paul Bogart's direction and six strong central performances are as responsible as Simon's script. Anne Bancroft, more Mother Courage than Mrs Robinson, offers a heart-warming, if exaggerated portrayal of the spurned wife and doting mother who sees her family collapse around her, and who is forever being urged by her sons to recall the time when, as a teenager, she waltzed with George Raft. Hume Cronyn as the cantankerous grandfather, gruff on the outside but a fount of wisdom and kindness underneath, also manages to inject an old stereotype with new life.

Superficially, *Broadway Bound* occupies the same territory as Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* or Woody Allen's *Radio Days*. Entirely set within the confines of the home at a time – the 40s – when radio helped to cement the generations, it even shares the look of Allen and Davies' pictures: the colours are muted, brown and grey predominate. There is inevitably something rather glib about *Broadway Bound* which prevents it from tugging at the emotions in the manner of Davies' more tortured rekindlings of his formative years. For all that, it is an enjoyable enough rehash of familiar themes.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Dark Wind

USA 1991

Director: Errol Morris

Certificate
15
Distributor
Guild
Production Company
Carolco International
In association with
North Face Motion
Picture Company
Executive Producers
Robert Redford
Bonni Lee
Production Executive
Theresa Curtin
Producer
Patrick Markey
Co-producer
Richard Erdman
Associate Producers
Allen Alsbrook
Steve Foley
Production Supervisor
Karen A. Hughes
Production Controller
Marsha Mann-Koff
Production Co-ordinators
Nancy J. King
2nd Unit:
Anne Merrem
Unit Production Manager
Patrick Markey
Location Manager
Michael Dellheim
2nd Unit Director
Steve Perry
Casting
Ellen Chenoweth
Extras/Local:
"Ka-Mook" Nichols
Rene Haynes
Assistant Directors
Peter S. Gries
Richard R. Feld
Kaaren F. Ochoa
Screenplay
Neal Jimenez
Eric Bergren
Mark Horowitz
Based on the novel
by Tony Hillerman
Director of Photography
Stefan Czapsky
Colour
Technicolor
2nd Unit Photography
Peter R. Norman
Phil Carr-Forster
Camera Operators
Phil Carr-Forster
B. Paul Edwards
Editors
Susan Crutcher
Freeman Davies
Location:
Susan Crutcher
Production Designer
Ted Bafaloukos
Art Director
John Krenz Reinhart
Jnr
Art Department
Co-ordinator
Michael Mercado
Set Decorator
Corey Kaplan
On-set Dresser
Rick Gillis
Storyboard Artist
Eric Ramsey
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Richard Stutsman
Music
Michel Colombier
Music Editor
Tom Kramer
Songs
"Love Letters" by Doug
Livingston, Harry
Shannon; "I Should
Have Known All Along"
by Wendy Kramer,
Harry Shannon; "Killin'
Time", "Louisiana Hush
Puppy" by Harry
Shannon

Costume Design
Eugenie Bafaloukos
Wardrobe Supervisor
Leonard Dallas
Additional Wardrobe
Leslie Neuman
Sherrie Brody
Make-up
Key:
Kenny Myers
Additional:
Karen Asano-Myers
Margaux Lancaster
Kelly L. Mann
Special Make-up
Cine-Makeup Inc
Title Design
Mimi Archie
Titles/Opticals
Howard Anderson
Supervising Sound Editor
John A. Larsen
Sound Editor
Fred Wasser
ADR Editor
George H. Anderson
Foley Editor
Douglas Kent
Sound Recordists
David Brownlow
Mark "Frito" Long
ADR Recordists
Charles Richards
Randy Piotroski
ADR Performers
Kee Curley
Judith M. Durand
Greg Finley
Barbara Iley
Geraldine Keams
David R. Koehler
Bob Neill
Gary Schwartz
Lewis Watchman
Foley Recordist
Gary Hecker
Dolby stereo
Consultant:
Steve F.B. Smith
Sound Re-recordists
Michael Minkler
Robert Beemer
Special Sound Effects
Randy Thom
Foley Artists
Jeff Wilhoit
Catherine Rowe
Advisers
Navajo:
Miller Nez
Hopi:
Eric Polinyouma
Production Assistants
Set:
Walter W. Parry Jnr
Fidel Moreno
Lisa Giammanco
Lynn Toledo
Office:
Wilbur Myron
Sherri Fries
Carlotta Piestewa
LA:
Corey Powell
Darren Franks
Stunt Co-ordinator
Dan Bradley
Stunts
Jeff Cadiente
Ray Lykins
Hank Calia
Lou Diamond Phillips'
Stand-in
Ivan Long

Cast
Lou Diamond Phillips
Officer Jim Chee
Gary Farmer
Cowboy Albert Dashee
Fred Ward
Lieutenant Joe
Leaphorn
Guy Boyd
Agent Johnson
John Karlen
Jake West

Jane Lorange
Gail Pauling
Gary Basaraba
Larry
Blake Clark
Ben Gaines
Faye B. Tso
Fannie Musket
Michelle Thrush
Shirley Topaha
Eugene Sekaquaptewa
Elderly Hopi Man
Ivory Ocean
Curtiss
James Koots
Taylor
Arlene Bowman
Edna Nezzie
Neil Kayquaptewa
Lomatawa
Loren Nahsonhoya
Danny
Irvin Tso
Wolf Dancer

Lance Baker
Mr Archer
Charlie Carpenter
Pilot
Julia Collins
Betty C. Barlow
Alice Y. Nez
Old Navajo Women
Billy Beck
Motel Clerk
Kee Collins
Emmett Tso
Old Navajo Men
Patrick Jensen
Albino Boy
Lonnie Mace
Timothy Glenn Riley
Men
Fidel Moreno
Bernie Toledo
Workmen

10,006 feet
111 minutes

In the Arizona desert, Jim Chee, a young Navajo tribal policeman, is staking out a windmill which has been regularly vandalised at night. When he hears a light airplane crash nearby, Chee finds that the landing lights of a makeshift runway lead smack into the rocks. The pilot and another man are dead, but someone else has driven off in a van, and Chee hears a fourth man scramble away as he approaches.

FBI agent Johnson takes over the case, which is drugs-related, and is clearly suspicious of Chee. His superior at the reservation station, Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn, tells Chee to concentrate on the windmill and his other assignments: a 'John Doe' discovered rotting in the hills, and the theft of jewellery from Jake West's trading post. A white man with a gift for magic tricks, West accuses Joseph Musket, an ex-con he employed as a favour to his son and whom he fired shortly before the burglary. Johnson and another FBI man break into Chee's trailer home and beat him up, but the young Navajo insists he knows nothing about the drugs missing from the plane or the van he heard drive away. Leaphorn advises him to take a few days' holiday and stay well away, but Chee decides to investigate on his own.

After painstaking tracking, he discovers the abandoned van and the corpse of a drug runner inside, but no drugs. He persuades his friend and Hopi colleague Cowboy Dashee to take him to the Hopi shaman who tends a shrine by the windmill. He accuses the shaman of being the vandal, but having proved his own good faith, gets an eye-witness report to the drugs murder that leads him to uncover the merchandise – buried on the site of the wreck. On checking Musket's records at the penitentiary, Chee learns that West's son was his partner, and that the latter was set up to be killed as an informer by Johnson only a few months previously.

Later Chee hears that the killer is to meet the drugs traffickers on a remote mountain top, a place the Hopis know as the Centre of Evil. On a stormy night, Chee fails to prevent the murder of another trafficker, but he unmasks the killer: Jake West. Obsessed with avenging his dead son, West has used the drugs as bait. Johnson and his

◀ partner hold Chee and West at gunpoint. But West slips out of his handcuffs and takes revenge on the agents, though he is fatally wounded in the process. The next morning, Leaphorn commends his junior cop, and Chee performs a blessing ceremony for the 'John Doe', Joseph Musket.

● Produced under Robert Redford's aegis, *The Dark Wind* is the first in a proposed series of films based on Tony Hillerman's contemporary Navajo crime novels. As a laconic framing sequence suggests – a car chase that never quite gets on the road – Hillerman doesn't write thrillers, he writes mysteries. He presents a puzzle to be solved, and puts the emphasis firmly on legwork and deductive reasoning. It is a classical, rather old-fashioned formula, with the focus very much on the cop. The difference is the way Hillerman works out of Navajo culture. Constitutional law is secondary to traditional lore; Jim Chee is a cop who's a singer, a shaman. "They don't know if you're gonna catch the bad guys or heal 'em!" remarks Joe Leaphorn, Hillerman's agnostic protagonist in an earlier series of novels, drafted in here in a supporting role.

Having attracted some initial criticism for the casting of Lou Diamond Phillips (after spending a year auditioning Native American actors), the film-makers scrupulously subtitle Navajo and Hopi dialogue. The result is remarkably faithful to the spirit of the novel; all but unimpeachable in respect of Native American culture. It is appropriate that Errol Morris, a documentarist fascinated by common-or-garden eccentricity, should take up this relatively anthropological Hollywood movie. Appropriate, too, that the film-maker/detective whose *Thin Blue Line* freed a convicted murderer should make his first feature about a shaman/cop.

Poetic justice is as near as Morris can get. For Chee, the Navajo concept of the "dark wind" precludes a justice system: when a man is doing wrong, a dark wind is blowing through him. It will blow over; the only possible resolution is a return to *hozho*, equanimity. Morris' transition from a cutting-room director to a storyboard *metteur en scene* is a thoughtful, engrossing, but rather self-conscious work. Set against the rich accomplishment of his documentarists, *The Dark Wind* is disappointingly modest, as if Morris were taking cover.

Fluent in the semantics of crime, and adept at marshalling evidence, he is still stretched to accommodate the logic of four complex plot strands – it might have been better not to try. Fatally, in a mystery, he tips us the wink too early. No fan of the genre will miss the culprit on his first screen appearance. Poetically, the killer feels himself validated in his own death; the real villains of the piece are the FBI. There's not much conviction in this dénouement, however, for all that it is scored by thunder and photographed by lightning.

Tom Charity

Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead

USA 1991

Director: Stephen Herek

Certificate 12
Distributor First Independent
Production Company Cinema Plus
An Outlaw production
In association with HBO/Mercury-Douglas Films
Executive Producer Michael Phillips
Producers Robert Newmyer
Brian Reilly
Jeffrey Silver
Associate Producer Caroline Baron
Production Co-ordinator Liz Wartenberg
Location Manager Buddy Enright
Post-production Supervisor Rebekah Rudd
Casting Associate: Debi Manwiller
Extras: Janet Cunningham
Assistant Directors Bradley M. Gross
Scott Printz
Veronica Gonzalez-Rubio
Screenplay Neil Landau
Tara Ison
Director of Photography Tim Suhrstedt
Colour Deluxe
B Camera Operator Randolph Sellars
Steadicam Operator Liz Ziegler
Video Playback Operator Vic Anderberg
Opticals Mercer
Graphic Artist Carol Lieberman Bass
Animation R/Greenberg Associates
Editor Larry Bock
Production Designer Stephen Marsh
Art Director Patricia Klawonn
Art Department Co-ordinator Martin Kohn
Set Design Mayne Schuyler Berke
Set Decorator Kara Lindstrom
Set Dresser Robyn L. Jacobs
Lead Scenic Painter Thomas V. Johnson
Storyboard Artist Sylvain Despretz
Special Effects Phil Bartko
Music David Newman
Additional: Bruce Nazarian
Music Producer Larry Marks
Music Supervisor Bill Green
Supervising Music Editor Jeff Carson
Songs "Draggin' the Line" by Tommy James, Robert L. King, performed by Beat Goes Bang; "Perfect World" by Glen Burtnik, Steven M. Krikorian, performed by Alias; "What She

Don't Know" by Bill Wray, performed by Flame; "Keep the Faith" by Bill Wray, "Runnin' on Luck Again" by Adam Holland, Gerard Zappa, Hugo Valenti, Craig Pullman, Neil Galluccio, performed by Valentine; "Chains" by Bill Wray, performed by Lorraine Lewis; "I Only Have Eyes for You" by Harry Warren, Al Dubin, performed by Timothy B. Schmit; "The Best Thing" by Richard Pleasance, performed by Boom Crash Opera; "Viva la Vogue" by Bard Frykberg, Hellman, performed by Army of Lovers; "Stampede" by Brad Gillis, Derek Sherinian, performed by Brad Gillis; "Bitter" by and performed by Terrell; "Life's Rich Tapestry" by and performed by Modern English; "Children of the Fire" by Todd Meagher, Brad Gillis, performed by Mike Reeves; "Gimme Some Money" by Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Rob Reiner, performed by Spinal Tap; "As Time Goes By" by Herman Hupfeld; "(Love Is) The Tender Trap" by Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen; "Twilight Zone Theme" by Marius Constant
Choreography Brad Jeffries
Costume Design Carol Ramsey
Wardrobe Supervisor Donna O'Neal
Make-up Kathy Shorkey
Title Design R/Greenberg Associates
Sound Design Leslie Shatz
Sound Editors Alan Splet
Patrick Dodd
E. Jeanne Putnam
ADR Group Co-ordinator Burton Sharp
Sound Recordists Ed Novick
Freddy Potatohead
ADR Recordist Bob Baron
Foley Recordist Eric Thompson
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists Leslie Shatz
David Parker
Michael Semanick
Foley Artists Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers
Production Assistants Office: Warren Paeff
Post-production: Philip Ross Kessel
Stunt Co-ordinator Jim Halty
Robert Hy Gorman's Double Bobby Porter
Stand-ins Tianna Bentley
Stephanie Fitzpatrick
John Fountain
Jeff Penley

Dog Trainers
Boone Narr
Sled Reynolds
Ursula Brauner

Cast
Christina Applegate
Sue Ellen ("Swell") Crandell
Joanna Cassidy
Rose Lindsey
John Getz
Gus Brandon
Josh Charles
Bryan
Keith Coogan
Kenny Crandell
Concetta Tomei
Mom Crandell
David Duchovny
Bruce
Kimmy Robertson
Cathy
Jayne Brook
Carolyn
Eda Reiss Merin
Lil Sturak
Robert Hy Gorman
Walter Crandell
Danielle Harris
Melissa Crandell
Christopher Pettiet
Zach Crandell
Chris Claridge
Lizard
Jeff Bollow
Mole
Michael Kopelow
Hellhound
Alejandro Quezada
Skull
Wendy Brainerd
Jill
Sarah Buxton
Tess
Kawena Chariot
Becky
Laurie Morrison
Katrina

Deborah Tucker
Nicole
Sydney Lassick
Franklin
Michelle Mais
Temp
Oscar Jordan
Mailroom Clerk
Marc Epstein
Lunch Waiter
Jim Holmes
Dinner Waiter
Cathy Ladman
Pam
Frank Dent
Mr Egg
Bryan Clark
Dr Permuter
Steve Ruggles
Officious Clerk
Randy Pelish
Delivery Man
E.E. Bell
Umpire
Kristen Corbett
Pretty Little Leaguer
Christopher Plummer
Howard
Carl Tramon
Ethan Wilson
Musicians
Logan Duncan
Liza
David Shawn Michaels
Dolly
Christopher Morley
Marilyn
Robert F. Newmyer
Brian M. Reilly
Mortuary Workers
Dan Castellana
Animated Babysitter
Bud
Elvis

9,446 feet
105 minutes

● Mom Crandell goes on a two-month summer holiday to Australia, leaving her five raucous kids, aged six to seventeen, to the mercies of an elderly disciplinarian, Lil Sturak. When Lil is discovered dead, the children dump her body at the mortuary and look forward to an adult-free summer. But money proves a problem. The eldest, Sue Ellen, known as Swell, tires of working at the Clown Dog burger joint and applies for a receptionist's job at a clothing manufacturer's, General Apparel West. Instead, her fake resumé wins her the position of executive assistant to Rose Lindsey, senior vice-president of operations.

While Swell struggles to pose as an experienced PA, the Crandell home life rapidly disintegrates under the lax control of Kenny, her scruffy eldest brother. Swell takes money from petty cash to tide them over until her monthly paycheck arrives, though the junior Crandells steal most of it to pay

for a home entertainment system and other luxuries. Complications pile up. Rose's lecherous boyfriend Gus advances on Swell, while relations with her own boyfriend Bryan temporarily sour once she discovers him to be the brother of Carolyn, a General Apparel employee determined to trip Swell up. Then her youngest brother Walter falls from the roof trying to adjust the TV aerial and is taken to hospital.

Walter's accident has a sobering effect. With General Apparel facing bankruptcy, Swell uses her eye for contemporary fashions to freshen the company's product, and presents the new range to prospective buyers at the Crandell house. Kenny and the clan tidy up the place; Swell's school friends serve as models. At the presentation, Carolyn and Bruce, another employee, give Rose proof of Swell's real age, and Mom arrives back unexpectedly. A mortified Swell confesses her charade, but since the buyers love the uniforms and Mom realises her children have matured during the summer, all is quickly forgiven.

● Suburbia, USA. The Crandell children's flaky mother jets off to Australia; the father is divorced, out of sight and uninterested. A hot-dog revolves on the record player, and the babysitter lies dead. Christina Applegate as the eldest sibling, Swell, parades with strategic bare shoulders. The scene is clearly set for a full-blooded, if crude, fantasy of teenage irresponsibility, with a dash of black humour.

But the black humour soon evaporates. Swell becomes an executive assistant in a high-rise business office. Corporately clothed, she battles with the mysteries of spread-sheets and fax machines. From this point, the film plummets further and further into stupidity, reaching its nadir in the fashion show presented in the grounds of the Crandell home. Before applauding buyers, parade Swell's school friends, modelling trendy uniforms for nurses and referees. "She needs the growing experience a lot more than I do," Swell tells her pals in the opening scenes, contemplating her mother's summer jaunt. This abject film, clumsily directed by Stephen Herek (*Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*), needs it even more.

Geoff Brown



A different growing experience: Christina Applegate

Final Analysis

USA 1992

Director: Phil Joanou

Certificate
15

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Warner Bros
In association with
Roven-Cavallo
Entertainment

Executive Producers
Richard Gere
Maggie Wilde

Producers
Charles Roven
Paul Junger Witt
Anthony Thomas

Co-producer
John Solomon

Associate Producer
Kelley Smith

Unit Production Manager
Ted Kurdyla

Location Managers
Allen Tinkley
San Francisco:
Barbara McQuaid
Lance Hoffman

Casting
David Rubin
Associates:
Debra Zane
(San Francisco):
Davia Nelson

Assistant Directors
Pat Kehoe
Eric Wall
Andrew Miller
San Francisco:
Don Wilkerson

Screenplay
Wesley Strick

Story
Robert Berger
Wesley Strick

Director of Photography
Jordan Cronenweth

Colour
Technicolor

Matte Photography
Susan Sitnek
Brian Adams

Process Photography
Hansard

Plate Photography
Supervisor
Mike Shea

Plate Photography
Kevin Fitzgerald

Camera Operators
Dennis Smith
Pinblock:
Pat Kenly

Special Visual Effects
Dream Quest Images

Visual Effects
Supervisor:
Hoyt Yeatman
Producer:
Dennis Hoffman
Editor:
Kathy Chasen-Hay

Opticals
Pacific Title
Supervisor:
Jeff Matakovich
Line-up:
Beth Block

Matte Artist
Bob Scifo

Editors
Thom Noble
Additional:
Chris Peppe

Production Designer
Dean Tavoularis

Art Director
Angelo Graham

Set Decorator
Bob Nelson

Special Effects Supervisor
Jim Fredburg

Special Effects
Stanley Amborn
David Amborn
Paul Obst
J.C. Machit

Music
George Fenton

Orchestrations
Jeff Atmajian

Music Editor
Sally Boldt

Costume Design
Aude Bronson-Howard

Costume Supervisors
Iris Crall
Lahly Poore

Costumers
Marsha Brand
Donna O'Neal
John George

Make-up Artists
Bob Mills
Robert Ryan
Jack Freeman
Jane English
Mindy Hall

Title Design
Wayne Fitzgerald

Supervising Sound Editor
Blake Leyh

Sound Editors
G.W. Brown
Linda Whittlesey

ADR Editor
Joe Dorn

Foley Editors
John Duvall
Christopher Flick

Sound Recordists
Lee Orloff

Music:
John Richards

ADR Recordist
Jeff Courtie

Foley Recordist
Dobly stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Wayne Artman
Frank Jones
Tom E. Dahl

Sound Effects Editors
Peter Sullivan

Foley Artists
Jerry Trent
Audrey Trent

Consultant
Robert H. Berger

Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Smolek

Stunts
Eddie Braun
Tracy Keehn-Dashnaw
Greg Walker
Ed Hamilton
Jeff Smolek
Brain J. Williams

Cast
Richard Gere
Isaac Barr
Kim Basinger
Heather Evans
Uma Thurman
Diana Baylor
Eric Roberts
Jimmy Evans
Paul Guilfoyle
Mike O'Brien
Keith David
Detective Huggins
Robert Harper
Alan Lowenthal
Agustin Rodriguez
Peppe Carrero
Rita Zohar
Dr Grusin
George Murdock
Judge Costello
Shirley Prestia
DA Kaufman
Tony Genaro
Hector
Katherine Cortez
Woman Speaker
Wood Moy
Doctor Lee
Corey Fischer
Forensic Doctor
Jack Shearer
Insurance Consultant
Doctor
Lee Anthony
Judge

Derick Alexander
Ambulance Driver
Abigail Van Alen
Night Nurse
Roger Bearde
Orderly
Dennis Matthews
Ambulance Attendant
Tessa Konig-Martinez
Woman Witness
Ernie Davis
Young Tough
Rico Alaniz
Old Spanish Man

Charlie Holiday
Jury Foreman
Jeff Tanner
Dinner Companion
Jeff Smolek
Hospital Security
John Roselius
Sheriff's Deputy
Michael Sayles
Deputy Guard
Anna Nicholas
Ex-girlfriend

11,203 feet
124 minutes

San Francisco. Psychiatrist Isaac Barr has been treating Diana Baylor, who recounts a recurring dream. She also tries to persuade Isaac to see her older sister, Heather Evans, who can tell him about their family history. Isaac is eventually approached by Heather; she tells him that Diana was raped by their father, who subsequently died in a mysterious fire, suspicion for which fell on Diana. Isaac and Heather begin an affair, although she is unhappily married to construction racketeer Jimmy Evans. By chance, Isaac encounters the couple in a restaurant and Heather leaves with him. When she returns home, she is confronted by the suspicious Jimmy and impulsively strikes and kills him with a dumb-bell weight.

Heather is charged with murder, but her lawyer O'Brien, working with Isaac, defends her on the grounds of temporary insanity due to pathological intoxication (a rare and contested condition in which even minute amounts of alcohol can cause violent mood changes). Isaac hopes to secure her quick release from the state mental hospital, but then discovers, in quick succession, that Diana's recurring dream has been lifted from Freud; that Heather had watched him in court during a case involving a plea of temporary insanity; and that she will receive four million dollars as a result of her husband's death.

He accuses Heather of constructing an elaborate plot using her sister; she tells him that she has his fingerprints on the murder weapon, which she made sure he previously handled. A police detective, Huggins, suspects Isaac of the murder but cannot prove anything until the weapon is found. While Heather gets her sister to retrieve the dumb-bell weight from a safe-deposit box, Isaac tells Diana that he wants to help her sister. He tricks Heather into accusing him of the murder in front of two doctors working for Jimmy's insurance company, and she becomes hysterical when Diana fails to produce the murder weapon as they had arranged, thus ensuring her further confinement.

Diana tells Isaac that she has thrown the dumb-bell away, but then gives it to Heather and helps her to escape from the hospital. Heather arranges to hand over the murder weapon to Huggins at a deserted lighthouse she had once visited with Isaac. Pursuing Heather, Isaac arrives in time to snatch the dumb-bell as she passes it to Huggins, thus ensuring his fingerprints are on it anyway. He also reveals that he knows Heather was the child-



Fatal flaw: Kim Basinger, Richard Gere

hood rape victim who murdered her father. During a subsequent chase up the lighthouse, Heather falls to her death after trying to kill Isaac and Huggins. Diana is acquitted of any involvement in Jimmy's murder, but it seems that she too is none too stable...

Final Analysis was for some time a project for John Boorman (his involvement is recounted in his diary in the recent Faber collection, *Projections*), and it is tempting to wonder whether he might have brought to this tortuously plotted piece the hallucinatory quality he gave his West Coast locations in *Point Blank*. In Phil Joanou's hands, however, San Francisco remains resolutely totemic, an obviously shorthand way to evoke the memory, if not the spirit, of that other great California thriller, *Vertigo*. Which is perhaps surprising, given that in *State of Grace*, his accomplished New York gangster movie, Joanou made Hell's Kitchen convincingly hellish.

Here, unfortunately, the nudging reminders of Hitchcock's film, embodied most clearly in the lighthouse which doubles for the belltower (complete with self-consciously obvious process shots), merely point up the hollowness of the exercise. The main problem lies in the numerous twists and turns of Wesley Strick's convoluted script. While there is a certain pleasure in their unravelling, they seem to have become the film's sole *raison d'être*, leaving no room to explore any real ambiguity in the relationship between Richard Gere's psychiatrist and the troubled sisters. This is a fairly fatal flaw given that the film supposedly turns on the unknowability of the two women.

In fact, the answer to the question of which of the pair suffered the child-

hood trauma is fairly arbitrary, since it only serves as another function of the all-consuming plot. The latter ensures that by the end Heather has become just another hysterical, *Fatal Attraction*-style she-devil, while the suggestion that Diana is finally turning into her sister simply underlines the nebulous status of her character throughout. And although there is an early hint that Isaac is perhaps willing trouble upon himself (he complains to his lawyer friend O'Brien that looking at people's thoughts has become a habit, and that after a while "they stop surprising you...I just want to be surprised"), this again counts for little.

The most interesting relationship in the film is actually that between Heather and her violent husband Jimmy Evans. This has a sado-masochistic edge which briefly generates more tension than all the courtroom shenanigans which follow his murder, thus creating an unfortunate sense of imbalance. Wesley Strick also wrote Scorsese's *Cape Fear*, and there is more than a hint of De Niro's Max Cady in Eric Roberts' first appearance, as, stripped to the waist, he sexually humiliates Heather.

But this potential violence never connects with the Isaac Barr character, in the way that Scorsese tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to make Cady a kind of catalyst rather than a simple source of menace. All of which supports Boorman's claim that he lost *Final Analysis* because Warner Bros and Gere wanted a much lighter film. In the end, this joins a line of recent, more or less efficient, anonymous and interchangeable psychological thrillers (*Jagged Edge*, *Presumed Innocent*, *Shattered*, *Deceived*) for which the label 'Hitchcockian' seems increasingly arbitrary.

Steve Jenkins

Kuffs

USA 1991

Director: Bruce A. Evans

Certificate
15
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
Dino De Laurentiis
Communications
Producer
Raymond Gideon
Line Producer
Mel Dellar
Associate Producer
Lisa Fitzgerald
Production Co-ordinator
Christine Baer
Unit Production Manager
Mel Dellar
Location Manager
Michael Neale
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Beverly Cusack
2nd Unit Director
David Ellis
Costing
Sally Dennison
Julie Selzer
Associate:
Patrick Rush
Extras:
Cinex West
Location:
Nancy Hayes Casting
Assistant Directors
Dennis Maguire
John Gallagher
Screenplay
Bruce A. Evans
Raymond Gideon
Director of Photography
Thomas Del Ruth
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operators
Buzz Feitshans IV
2nd Unit:
Paul Edwards
Editor
Stephen Semel
Production Designers
Victoria Paul
Armin Ganz
Art Director
Tom Davick
Set Decorator
Elaine Bowin
Diana Williams
Set Dressers
Dwain Wilson
Ann Knight
Ronnie Lombard
Archie D'Amico
Draughtsman
Troy Sizemore
Production Illustrator
Sherman Labby
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Dale Martin
Music
Harold Faltermeyer
Music Supervisor
Jolene Cherry
Supervising Music Editor
Allan K. Rosen
Music Editor
Michael Dittrock
Songs
"The Future's So Bright
I Gotta Wear Shades"
by Pat McDonald,
performed by Timbuk
3; "Need for Speed"
by Jini Hughes,
performed by
Regulators; "She
Takes My Breath Away"
by Eddie Money, Marc
Tanner, Dennis
Morgan, Monty Byrom,
Gary Bromham,
performed by Eddie
Money; "I Don't Want
to Live Without You"
by Gregg Tripp, Elliot
Wolff, performed
by Gregg Tripp

Choreography
Karole Armitage
Costume Design
Mary E. Vogt
Costume Supervisor
Violet Cane
Costumers
Denise Martinez
Pam Withers
Make-up Artist
Allan Apone
Titles/Opticals
Howard Anderson Co.
Supervising Sound Editor
Jay Wilkinson
Sound Editors
Lou Angelo
John A. Larsen
Scott Hecker
Simon Coke
Susan Dudeck
Jeff Rose
ADR Editor
Hamilton Sterling
Foley Editor
Fred Brown
Sound Recordists
David Brownlow
Rudy Lara
Tony Jenkins
San Francisco:
Agamemnon
Andrianos
ADR Recordists
Charleen Richards
Weldon Brown
Foley Recordist
Greg Orloff
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Chris Jenkins
Mark Smith
D.M. Hemphill
Special Vocal Effects
Frank Welker
Foley
Dan O'Connell
Loop Group Co-ordinator
Leigh French
Weapons Adviser
Branko Wohlfahrt
Production Assistants
Doug Aarniokoski
Paul Bellman
Vince Burns
Steve Cowie
David Garden
Nancy Mahaffey
San Francisco:
Jeannie Jeha
Lisa Buffa
Stunt Co-ordinator
David Ellis
Stunts
May Boss
Steve Boyum
Clarke Coleman
Jeff Dashnaw
Steve Davison
Shane Dixon
Annie Ellis
Richard Ellis
Freddie Hice
Steve Holladay
Jeff Imada
John C. Meier
Manny Perry
Chad Randall
Erik Rondell
R.A. Rondell
Ric Waugh
Cast
Christian Slater
George Kuffs
Milla Jovovich
Maya Carlton
Tony Goldwyn
Ted Bukovsky
Bruce Boxleitner
Brad Kuffs
Troy Evans
Captain Morino
George De La Pena
Sam Jones
Leon Rippey
Kane

Ric Waugh
Steve Holladay
Chad Randall
Clarke Coleman
Hoods
Craig Benton
Paint Store Owner
Ashley Judd
Paint Store Owner's
Wife
Joshua Cadman
Bill Donnelly
Mary Ellen Trainor
Nikki Allyn
Aki Aleong
Mr Chang
Henry G. Sanders
Building Owner
Dom Magwill
Restaurant Owner
Father Kevin Leidich
Priest
E. Keith Polk
Emergency Room
Doctor
Susan Schelling
Emergency Room
Nurse
Loren Blackwell
Stuart Burks
Kim Robillard
Peter Coca
Gary Munch
Detective
Don Schlossman
Police Officer
Lu Leonard
Harriet
Roger Rook
Gun Salesman
Don S. David
Gun Instructor
Phil Michkin
Inspector Doug Sticks

Stephen Park
Officer Pavaro
Julie Strayn
Sona Jaguar
Kane's Girls
Erik Rondell
Counterman
Ross Partridge
Robert
John Apicella
Janitor
Tim Davison
Jumper
Megan Barry
Nurse
Ryan Cutrona
Florist
Scott Williamson
Alan Eddy
Dennis Hulman
Dr Carlton
Patricia J. Earnest
Mrs Carlton
Thunder
Thunder
Joe Hart
Gun Salesman
Allan Apone
Taxi Driver
Kenny Endoso
Japanese Businessman
Al Goto
Willie Leong
Japanese Hoods
Karen D'Ettore
Kelly D'Ettore
Baby Sarah
Jon Greene
Cop
Janis Uhley
Street Singer

9,145 feet
102 minutes

San Francisco. When twenty-one-year-old high-school dropout George Kuffs' girlfriend Maya Carlton announces her pregnancy, his first impulse is to leave town. But the fatal shooting of his brother Brad forces him to stay and deal with the inheritance Brad has left in the form of the Patrol Special Unit, part of the city's unique, privately funded franchise policing system. Moved to carry on in the family tradition, and eager to catch the killer, Kuffs considers the offer of affluent lawyer Sam Jones to buy out the unit, but instead joins the force as a Special Patrol cadet.

He is given regular patrolman Ted Bukovsky as partner and mentor, and the relationship between the two is initially antipathetic. Bukovsky tries to restrain Kuffs from singlemindedly tracking down flamboyant hit man Kane, who has figured in a wave of local robberies, including a highly lucrative art-gallery heist, and who Kuffs believes murdered Brad. Kuffs tails the gunman as he delivers a mysterious red tubular package to Jones, who in turn visits a Chinese laundry with it. Later, while trying to talk down a potential suicide from a window ledge, Kuffs comes under Kane's fire.

He returns home from hospital treatment to cook a reconciliation dinner for Maya, and finally despatches Kane in a gun battle that devastates his flat and proves difficult to explain when his girlfriend arrives with parents in tow. When Jones' efforts at bribery are rejected, he has Kuffs removed from duty for failing the job's high-school graduation requirement. But the young man visits Bukovsky - himself suspended for sleeping with the police chief's wife - to borrow a car and check out the Chinese laundry

with a sniffer dog, in the hope of linking Jones with narcotics activities.

On the premises, he discovers a number of valuable paintings rolled up inside the previously unexplained red tubes, whereupon Jones arrives, ties him up, and plants a time bomb. With seconds to spare, Bukovsky saves Kuffs from the explosion, and the partners follow Jones to a car-park drop-off with some unscrupulous Japanese art investors. In the ensuing gunfight and chase, Kuffs kills Jones and is rewarded for his bravery with reinstatement. Now a proud father, he is reunited with Maya and their baby.

Balancing private enterprise with public service, San Francisco's Patrol Special units might have offered promising material for a Sidney Lumet-style police corruption picture. Instead we're presented with a particularly ill-judged comedy/thriller star vehicle in the flip, casually violent, post-Beverly Hills Cop fashion. Having confirmed his charismatic screen presence in independent projects like *Heathers* and *Pump Up the Volume*, Christian Slater is unable to breathe life into a product so devoid of vitality.

A tired revenge motive and an art-theft McGuffin supply the weariest of plot motors, and the prospect of fatherhood heavy-handedly signals the protagonist's confrontation with maturity. Co-writers Raymond Gideon and Bruce Evans spice the mix with touches of would-be wacky humour - notably in the laundry scene where the bound and gagged Kuffs' muffled cries for help are translated by subtitles. But, in the way it sacrifices sound construction for strained overplaying from a misused star, *Kuffs* is reminiscent of nothing so much as the misconceived showcases for Whoopi Goldberg that followed *The Color Purple*.

The Gideon-Evans writing team has a credible track record that includes John Carpenter's *Starman* and the beautifully handled rites-of-passages tale *Stand by Me*. But what is missing in *Kuffs*, where they have asserted full control over their material, is a surer directorial or production hand. Evans' debut behind the camera is distinguished by an ineffective ostentation, while the fact that Slater's direct-to-camera monologues come across quite so flatly seems to confirm a certain lack of judgment about what reads well on the page and what will play on the screen.

Trevor Johnston



More rites: Christian Slater, Milla Jovovich

The Lawnmower Man

United Kingdom/USA 1992

Director: Brett Leonard

Certificate
15
Distributor
First Independent
Production Companies
Allied Vision(London)/
Lane Pringle
(Los Angeles)
Executive Producers
Edward Simons
Steven Lane
Bob Pringle
Producer
Gimel Everett
Co-producer
Milton Subotsky
Production Co-ordinator
Lisa M. Cochran
Production Manager
Patty Whitcher
2nd Unit Manager
Lisa M. Cochran
Location Manager
Robert Katz
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Michael E. Yip
2nd Unit Director
Gimel Everett
Costing
Sally Dennison
Patrick Rush
Extras:
Star Casting
Mary Santiago
Cheryl Faye
Assistant Directors
Ian McVey
Sarah Nugent
Johnstone
Mara J. Lee
2nd Unit:
John Scherer
John Vohlers
Michael E. Yip
Screenplay
Brett Leonard
Gimel Everett
Based on the short
story by Stephen King
Director of Photography
Russell Carpenter
Colour
DeLuxe
2nd Unit Photography/
Steadicam Operator
Marty Collins
Video Playback
Steve Irwin
Ted Schelling
Special Visual Effects
Conceived
by/Supervisors:
Brett Leonard
Gimel Everett
Director:
Jonathan Keeton
Virtual Reality
Simulation Sequences/
Digital Live Action
Computer Graphic Effects
Angel Studios
Xaos, Inc
Angel Studios
Animation Directors:
Jill Hunt
Michael Limber
Animators/Modelers:
Jeff Hayes
Paul D. Lewis
Simulation Director:
Brad Hunt
Production
Co-ordinator:
Lisa Sontag
Creative Design:
Albert Co
Programmer:
Saeed Contractor
Executive Support:
Diego Angel
Production Assistant:
Rob Javier
Xaos, Inc
Designers/Animators:

Roberta Brandao
Hayden Landis
Tony Lupidi
Ken Pearce
Henry Preston
Ric Tringali
Art Director/
Project Co-ordinator:
Mark Malmberg
Software Support:
Eric Texier
Executive Producer:
Helene Plotkin
Executive Support:
Arthur Schwartzberg
Michael Tolson
Digital Compositing/
Helmet Displays
Western Images
Computer Graphic
Fire Effects
Homer and Associates
Technical Director:
John Adamczyk
Production:
Peter Conn
Michael A. Kory
Background Graphics
The Lawnmower Man:
Macintosh
Development Team
Project Design Leader:
Matt MacLaurin
Animators:
Mark Arcarese
Mikel Evins
Producer:
David C. Traub
VSI Logo/
Computer Screen Graphics
The Gosney Company
Creative Director:
Michael Gosney
Art Director/Animator:
Jack Davis
Harry Artist
Jimi Simmons
Motion Capture
Umberto Lazzari
Francesco Chiarini
Editor
Allan Baumgarten
Associate Editor
Kevin D. Ross
Production Designer
Alex McDowell
Art Director
Chris Farmer
Art Department
Co-ordinator
Briana Wilson
Set Decorator
Jacqueline Masson
Set Dressers
Justin Bailey
Danny Butch
Eric Troop
John Hulett
Tom Petrello
On-set:
Vito San Filippo
2nd Unit On-set:
Irene Adamczyk
Special Design/Illustration
Albert Co
Lead Scenic
Paula J. Good
Scenics
Patrick Shields
David Thorpe
Alexandra Wiesenfeld
Jason Pollock
Storyboards
Eric Ramsey
Conceptual:
22 product
Key Special Effects
Frank Ceglia
Special Effects
Paul Haines
Tom Ceglia
Miniature Effects
David Stripes
Productions, Inc
Supervisor:

Anthony Doublin
Pyrotechnician:
Frank Ceglia
Cyrospheres/Cybersuits
Reel EFX Inc
Co-ordinator:
Martin Becker
Key:
Erick Brennan
Music
Jurgen Brauning
Songs
"Jobe's Fury" by and
performed by Sterling;
"Game of Hearts" by
Gregg Leonard, Joel
Hazard, "Man Wants"
by Gregg Leonard, Joel
Hazard, Elizabeth
Presley, performed by
Creative Rite; "State of
Shock" by John Hayes,
Lyn Vaus, performed
by Carnal Garage
Costume Design
Mary Jane Fort
Wardrobe Supervisor
Wendy Van Dyke
Key Make-up
Patti Brand
Make-up
Vincent Tremonti
Special Make-up Effects
Magical Media
Industries, Inc
Designer/Producer:
John Buechler
Production Manager:
John Foster
Production Controller:
Lynn Buechler
Sculptor:
John Foster
Stop-motion:
Rodd Matsui
Main Title Design
Angel Studios
Titles/Opticals
Perpetual Motion
Pictures
**Sound Design/Post-
production Supervisor**
Frank Serafine
Sound Editors
Digital Dialogue:
Miguel Rivera
Craig Clark
Wilson Dyer
Sound Recordists
Russel C. Fager
Music:
Hage Van Dijk
ADR Recordist
Randy Honaker
Foley Recordist
Greg Cheever
Dolby stereo
Consultant:
Tom Ehle
Sound Re-recordists
Dennis Patterson
Randy Honaker
Sound Effects Editor
L. Mo Weber
Special Vocalisations
Frank Welker
Foley Artist
John Post
Sacred Geometry
Consultant
Robert Gulnik
Production Assistants
Michael T. Larsen
Elizabeth Cooper
Rachel L. Sterns
Heidi Santelli
Charlotte Brosnan
2nd Unit:
Scott Coder
London:
Catherine Peak

Stunt Co-ordinator
Dan Bradley
Stunts
Rick Barker
Hal Burton
Laura Dash
Geno Hart
Dale Gibson
Brett Jones
Kerry Rossal
Bobby Burns
Rick Avery
Lee Poppie
Melinda Armstrong
George Fisher
Erik Stabenau
Al Jones
Daniel Barringer
Scott Alan Cook
Mark Orrison
Stand-ins
Ken S. Noden
Gregg Mazzy
Head Animal Trainer
Brian McMillan
Animal Trainers
Greg Lille
Hayden Rosenaur
Helicopter Pilot
Craig Hosking
Cast
Jeff Fahey
Jobe Smith
Pierce Brosnan
Lawrence Angelo
Jenny Wright
Marnie Burke
Mark Bringleston
Sebastian Timms
Geoffrey Lewis
Terry McKeen
Jeremy Slate
Father McKeen
Dean Norris
Director
Colleen Coffey
Caroline Angelo
Troy Evans
Lieutenant Goodwin
Rosalee Mayeux
Carla Parkette
Austin O'Brien
Peter Parkette
Michael Gregory
Security Chief
Joe Hart
Patrolman Cooley
John Laughlin
Jake Simpson
Ray Lykins
Harold Parkette
Jim Landis
Ed Walts
Mike Valverde
Day Gate Guard
Dale Raul
Dolly
Frank Collison
Night Gate Guard
Jonathan Smart
Assistant
Steffen Gregory Foster
Letchworth
Doug Hutchison
Security Tech
Denney Pierce
Skinhead Guard
Roger Rook
Older Guard
Craig Benton
White Coat
Randall Fontana
Hotel Waiter
Mara Duronslet
Young Woman Clerk
Duane Byrne
Letchworth Buddy
9,743 feet
108 minutes

church. Using drugs and a VR datasuit and headset, Angelo increases Jobe's learning potential. Jobe's personality changes: he rebels against the abuse of Father McKeen, stands up to local bully Jake Simpson, and abandons his friend Peter Parkette, a ten-year-old with an aggressive father, in favour of an affair with the sexy Marnie Burke. Flushed with success, Angelo returns to Cybertech to further his experiments. However, The Shop secretly switch Angelo's drugs with a batch from the abandoned Project 5.

Under the new treatment, Jobe develops telepathic and telekinetic powers. One night, Marnie joins Jobe in a VR synch-up in the Cybertech labs. A cosmic electronic love-making ensues which destroys Marnie's brain. When Angelo refuses to continue the experiments, Jobe steals and injects the entire batch of the Project 5 drug. At a meeting in Washington, Angelo learns of The Shop's intentions to turn Jobe into a super-soldier. Back in his home town, Jobe murders Father McKeen, scrambles Jake's brain, and uses his telekinetic powers to kill Peter's father with his lawnmower. Under Jobe's influence, the police treat the deaths as accidental. Angelo intercepts Jobe at his home, where the latter's spirit has entered Angelo's computer. Now able to affect reality as if it were merely a VR image, Jobe disintegrates a team of Shop hit men and flees to Cybertech where he intends to plug himself into the world-wide computer main-frame and then announce his success by ringing every telephone in the world.

Angelo blocks the Cybertech computer's access to the outside world, places explosives throughout the plant, and watches Jobe's body disintegrate inside his VR datasuit as he becomes an entirely electronic entity. Donning a VR helmet and datasuit, Angelo joins and is trapped by Jobe in his electronic world. But when Jobe senses Peter's presence in the complex, he frees Angelo to save the boy. As Jobe battles to break the blocking code and escape from the Cybertech computer, Angelo drags Peter from the exploding complex. Jobe finally breaks the code as the building erupts. Later, the phones begin to ring...

Although misleadingly credited as "Stephen King's *The Lawnmower Man*", Brett Leonard's film is actually an amalgam of the director's own project, *CyberGod*, with the bare bones of King's seven-page short story. Unsurprisingly, the result often seems to pull in different directions. On the one hand, King's source produces a simple comic horror motif in which a Pan-worshipping gardener uses ancient powers to mow lawns with his mind. When a shocked home-owner complains to the police, he is cut down by a telepathically powered lawnmower, a sacrifice to the Great God Pan. On the other hand, there are the preoccupations of Leonard's sci-fi adventure concerned with the tensions between reality as we know it and the emergent worlds of



Same old future: Pierce Brosnan

'virtual reality'.

Rather than simply trotting out the usual 'nature is good'/science is bad' dichotomy, Leonard's script and direction juggle the relative values of the two domains. At first, the visual imagery seems to pass judgment on the alienation from nature which VR induces, cutting from the harsh blues and abrasive noise of the VR environment to the warm browns and greens of the outside world, where birdsong mingles with the soft sound of the wind. Yet this idyll is soon revealed to be harsh and unforgiving, a world in which children and the simple-minded are bullied and abused. Jobe's escape from this hostile atmosphere into the awesome splendour of computer-generated reality is his salvation, allowing him to discover his true potential.

Leonard posits the world of VR as a new continent in which God's (in)justice holds no sway, and in which both Angelo and Jobe are potential Cyber-Gods. Like Frankenstein, though, Angelo cannot fulfil the needs of his creation, who then becomes the devil to his failed deity. But in this subjective, Nietzschean paradise, archaic concepts of good and evil have no meaning. Is Angelo himself devil or angel? Although Leonard's treatment of the philosophical aspects of the material is impressive, the film comes unstuck when Jobe's mental powers take on a physical dimension. Plundering ideas from other King sources (notably *Firestarter* and *Carrie*), Leonard introduces telekinesis and pyrokinesis as devices whereby Jobe's powers are extended across disparate universes. "We've been awakening the ancient", declares Angelo, muddying the plot's

waters with conflicting themes of lost primitive powers and emergent sciences. The engaging theme of subjective realities disintegrates and the final third of the film descends into an effects bonanza, with explosions, chases, spectacular deaths and other stock-in-trade climactic material.

Leonard's motives in pulling the action back into the real world are clearly inspired by a recognition of the limitations of cinematic representations of VR. Despite the stunning visual effects provided by Xaos and Angel Studios (all the more remarkable considering the relatively low ten-million-dollar budget), we are still merely watching a film rather than actually experiencing Jobe's new reality. This restriction reduces us to onlookers in a game which demands interaction. The effects team's efforts to circumvent this problem ironically confuse matters further; rather than simply showing us Jobe's point of view, the team contrives a privileged third-person perspective through which the audience can see Jobe moving inside his own subjective world.

The result is bafflingly inconsistent and reminds one that, for all its 'new science' pretensions, *The Lawnmower Man* simply rehashes computer-generated and animated 'morph' effects techniques pioneered ten years ago in Walt Disney's *Tron*. The recent, more inventive use of these same techniques in James Cameron's *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2* only serves to highlight their shortcomings here. As Angelo's departing wife ruefully observes, "It may be the future to you, Larry, but it's just the same old shit to me".

Mark Kermode

At the headquarters of Cybertech, Dr Lawrence Angelo uses drugs and Virtual Reality technology to improve the learning ability of chimpanzees. Infuriated by the demands of financiers The Shop to pursue Project 5, which also increases the animals' aggression, Angelo resigns. At home, he continues his own experiments on simpleton gardener Jobe Smith, an abused ward of the local

The Long Day Closes

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Terence Davies

Certificate
12
Distributor
Mayfair
Entertainment/Palace
Production Company
Film Four
International
In association with the
British Film Institute
Executive Producers
Ben Gibson
Colin MacCabe
Producer
Olivia Stewart
**Executive in Charge
of Production**
Angela Topping
Production Co-ordinator
Lesley Stewart
Production Manager
Chris Harvey
Location Managers
Andrew MacDonald
Jeff Bowen
Costing
Doreen Jones
Assistant Directors
Gus Maclean
Tommy Gormley
David Gilchrist
Screenplay
Terence Davies
Director of Photography
Michael Coulter
In colour
Cloud Photography
Chris Plevin
Jeremy Kelly
Camera Operator
Harriet Cox
Editor
William Diver
Production Designer
Christopher Hobbs
Art Director
Kave Naylor
Scenic Artists
Catherine Goodley
Lynne Whiteroad
Special Effects
All F/X Ltd
Model Ships
Areteffects
Music Director
Robert Lockhart
Music Extracts
"A Shropshire
Lad - Rhapsody
for Orchestra" by
George Butterworth;
"Symphony No 10"
by Gustav Mahler;
"Minuet from The
Quintet in E Op.13 n.5"
by Luigi Boccherini;
"Fox Fanfare" by
Alfred Newman
Music Supervisor
Bob Last
Songs
"Stardust" by Hoagy
Carmichael, Mitchell
Parish, performed by
Nat "King" Cole; "If
You Were the Only Girl
in the World" by Nat
Ayers, Clifford Grey;
"At Sundown" by
Walter Donaldson,
performed by Doris
Day; "Blow the Wind
Southerly" performed
by Kathleen Ferrier;
"The Carousel Waltz"
by Richard Rodgers;
"She Moved Through
the Fair" by Hughes &
Collum; "Once in Royal
David's City" by Cecil
Frances Alexander,
Henry J. Gauntlett;
"The Cokey Cokey" by
Jimmy Kennedy; "Auld
Lang Syne," "Faith of

Our Fathers" by Robert
King; "Tantum Ergo"
by Corinthe & Webb;
"Once in Love with
Amy", "On a Slow Boat
to China" by Frank
Loesser; "My Foolish
Heart" by Victor Young,
Ned Washington; "Me
and My Shadow" by
Al Jolson, Dave Dreyer,
Billy Rose; "Principles
of Physical Geology"
by Arthur Holmes;
"Ae Fond Kiss (And
Then We Sever)" by
Robert Burns; "Over
the Bannister" by Hugh
Martin, Ralph Blane,
performed by Judy
Garland; "Civilization
(Bongo, Bongo, Bongo)"
by Bob Hilliard,
Carl Sigmond; "When
I Leave the World
Behind", "We're a
Couple of Swells" by
Irving Berlin; "I Don't
Know Why (I Just Do)"
by Fred Ahlert, Roy
Turk; "Oh You
Beautiful Doll" by
Seymour Brown, Nat
Ayer; "Tammy" by Jay
Livingston, Ray Evans,
performed by Debbie
Reynolds; "If I Had
My Life to Live Over"
by Joe Jaffe, Henry
Tobias, Larry Vincent;
"The Long Day Closes"
by Henry Chorley,
Sir Arthur Sullivan
Costume Designer
Monica Howe
Wardrobe Supervisor
Patrick Wheatley
Make-up
Aileen Seaton
Heather Jones
Titles
Plume Partners
Opticals
Peerless Camera
Company Ltd
Sound Editors
Alex Mackie
Dialogue:
Patrick O'Neill
Sound Recorder
Moya Burns
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recorder
Aad Wirtz
Sound Effects
Cinesound Effects
Library Ltd
Cast
Marjorie Yates
Mother
Leigh McCormack
Bud
Anthony Watson
Kevin
Nicholas Lamont
John
Ayse Owens
Helen
Tina Malone
Edna
Jimmy Wilde
Curly
Robin Polley
Mr Nicholls
Peter Ivatts
Mr Bushell
Joy Blakeman
Frances
Denise Thomas
Jean
Patricia Morrison
Amy
Gavin Mawdsley
Billy

Kirk McLaughlin
Labourer/Christ
Marcus Heath
Black Man
Victoria Davies
Nun
Brenda Peters
Nurse

Karl Skeggs
Albie
Lee Blennerhassett
Peter Hollier
Jason Jevons
Bullies
7,651 feet
85 minutes

As nocturnal rain thrashes derelict homes, a flashback to eleven-year-old Bud sitting quietly on stairs opens a mosaic of moments from a Liverpool childhood, 1955-6. His home life is illumined by his mother's friendly smiles, her tear at a photograph of his dead father, the glowing torso of big brother Kevin chatting while mending a bike, and a vivacious quartet of grown-up sisters. He wheedles shillings for the pictures, hangs around a cinema's exit doors, and implores adult strangers to take him in to 'A' certificate films.

At his new, Catholic, school he gets the cane for lateness, becomes prey for three playground bullies, and is shamed by a nurse who, inspecting heads, loudly declares "Clean" or "Lice". Often friendless, aimless, he gazes at working brickies, who mock him (with a hint of sexual suggestiveness). His mind echoes with film soundtrack quotes, mostly nostalgic; as a day-dream light bathes an empty desk near his, a sailing ship glides by. But in a nightmare, his bedroom wall extrudes brutal male hands that grip his face.

During family visits, he hovers uncertainly between the women and the men, before drifting back with the women, who contemplate, indulgently, the coarser sex. A neighbouring housewife, Helen, constantly but fondly nags her husband Curly for his unending imitations of Hollywood actors; Bud performs alongside his pleasantly tipsy sister as she impersonates Judy Garland. When his mother suggests that he run out to join two schoolmates walking by, he can only flinch in despair at having no friends. In a rare bout of physical activity, he swings mournfully from an iron bar over a basement staircase.

Art, sacred or profane, affords him epiphanic moments, as when Curly's off-key singing starts a family sing-song, or when God's-eye-views of picture palace and school chapel intimate order and community. Certain soundtrack voices, however, are ominous: George Minafer Amberson getting his comeuppance and being forgotten by all; Miss Havisham's eerie unfamiliarity with the word 'play'. In class, a teacher's turned back, and dry voice cataloguing the processes of erosion, epitomise global indifference. None the less, the eponymous vespers, sung by a woman's voice over cloudscape with glittering moon, reverse cold, distant, precious light.

Terence Davies' best film yet testifies to the vigour and flexibility of cinematic realisms. It's intensely 'realist' in three common senses: in bending, not subject to form, but form to subject; in generating 'the shock of recognition' at experiences

privately powerful but culturally neglected; and in exploring the lives of ordinary people without foreshortening their sufferings and constraints. Davies' especially delicate realism requires a rigorous fidelity to raw experience, carefully protected from conventional discourse, although conveyed by artifice. Davies' style is so closely geared to one individual child, in a largely unique situation (local-and-family micro-culture), as to constitute a sort of 'micro-realism', akin to the micro-history now subverting Marxist stereotypes of class and culture and their "abolition of the subject".

Davies' double focus, on a vanished world and on subjectivity, far from diluting realism, only extends it. As with Proust and Joyce, subjective remembrance and documentation interweave. A sprinkling of self-reflexive touches (a music teacher telling a percussionist, "Just tap it, you're not introducing a film"), and the many looks at, or just off, camera, are not alienation but, on the contrary, complicity effects. Davies' aesthetic is utterly un-Brechtian, expecting consummate identification with an everpathetic protagonist, much wronged by life and unable to hurt a fly.

The visual style might be described as 'Wenders intensified'; its frames-within-the-frame, flat planes, and painterly textures constrict the normal perception of spaces (as flexibly defined arenas for activity). A recurrent composition (a vertical split of stairs and hallway) emblemises the boy's Limbo-land; ultimately, perhaps, it relates to the perpendicular overhead shots spectacularly bracketing a cinema's projection beam with a chapel's aisle.

The colours range from iodine hues to greens so luminous they're almost white. Every pose, every group, seems on the verge of becoming a still life, embalmed by the very purity of its

emotion. The exquisite play with looks ranges from Bud's quick glance up at a faceless teacher about to cane his hand to adult gazes which, slightly averted from camera, and us, seem cruelly refused or well-meaningly blind. It's as if only musical form - the songs - allow an emotional follow-through. The pressbook speaks of a 'joyous' film, but Bud's friendlessness and inactivity implies a steady misery, heavy with dire potential. Eerie, too, the way Bud is barely encouraged, even by loving adults, in ego-building activities. Around this too-impeccably cherubic boy cluster glaring gaps and lacks. Certainly Davies' 'miniaturism' contrasts with, say, *Les 400 Coups*, whose interactions weave broader perspectives.

Bud and family are evidently different persons from those in previous Davies families. But Davies' autobiographical remarks virtually conflate the screen families, so that the fear-someness of Bud's father will be widely assumed. However, the marginalisation of any one big obvious threat by more varied and subtle material helps to soften Davies' gross miserabilism. It should also nudge spectators to seek, not some single cause or deep structure which would determine everything, but a conjunction of independent factors (as per common sense and chaos theory).

In some pluri-causal view, Bud's family position, at the tail-end of many siblings, might be as crucial as favourite targets like punitive school discipline or paternal violence (which Political Correctness has confused with 'patriarchy'). Chiselled and delicate, the acting ranges from memory-vignettes akin to 'magic realism' (especially for women) to an easier flow (for men). Helen and copperknob Curly could have popped in from a next door by Mike Leigh - another, albeit less precise, microrealist.

Raymond Durgnat



Realism, multiple and magic: Ayse Owens, Leigh McCormack

The Lunatic

USA 1990

Director: Lol Creme

Certificate

15

Distributor

Oasis

Production Company

Island Pictures

Executive Producers

Chris Blackwell

Dan Genetti

Producers

Paul M. Heller

John Pringle

Co-producer

Matthew Binns

Associate Producers

Kathy Zebrowski

Marnee K. Bie

Production Co-ordinator

Olga Pogostin

Unit Manager

Peter Packer

Location Manager

Michael London

Casting

Kingston:

Janet Morrison

Assistant Directors

Laura Groppe

Franz J. Marzouka

Carmen Franczyk

Screenplay

Anthony C. Winkler

Based on his own novel

Director of Photography

Richard Greatrex

Colour

CFI

Editor

Michael Connell

Video:

Jerry Chatter

Art Director

Giorgio Ferrarri

Set Dresser

Jennifer Chang

Special Effects

Special Effects Limited

Music

Wally Badarou

Music Director

Lol Creme

Music Extract

"Ride of the Valkyrie"

by Richard Wagner,

performed by Group Pro

Music Producer

Paul Heller

Music Editor

Michael Connell

Songs

"Worky, Worky" by

C. Edwards, T. Edwards,

performed by The

Burning Flames;

"Hurricane" by E.

Omeally, J. Lodge,

performed by J.C. Lodge;

"Fire" by T. Robinson,

A. Gaye, B. Forde, L.

Forde, performed by

Aswad; "The Sleeper

Awakens" by Richard

Harvey; "Evil Eyes" by

D. Francis, performed

by Donovan; "Beautiful

Woman" by F. Hibbert,

performed by Toots;

"Dancin' Mood" by

Alphonsus Cassell,

performed by Arrow;

"Youth" by M. Rose,

performed by Black

Uhuru; "The Lunatic"

by K. Allen, performed

by Admiral Tibet;

"Onward Christian

Soldiers" (trad.);

"All Things Bright

and Beautiful" (trad.)

Costume Design

Patricia Griffiths

Costume Supervisor

Deb Brandt

Make-up

Cecile Burrowes

Title Design

Louis Gerrard Associates

Titles/Opticals

Mercer Opticals

Sound Design

Lew Goldstein

Supervising Sound Editor

Patrick M. Griffith

Sound Editor

Dialogue:

Richard Corwin

Sound Recordist

Kim Ornitz

ADR Recordist

Gerry Lentz

Foley Recordists

Jeff Vaughn

Brian Geer

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Ken Teaney

Bill Freesh

Production Assistants

Franklyn Harrison

Barmak Behdadnia

Set:

Donovan Mendes

Cast

Julie T. Wallace

Inga

Paul Campbell

Aloysius

Reggie Carter

Busha

Carl Bradshaw

Service

Winston Stona

Linstrom

Linda Gambrell

Sarah

Rosemary Murray

Widow Dawkins

Lloyd Rockford

Judge

Abe Dabdoub

A.D. Sareem

Tony Hendriks

Hotel Manager

Michael London

Bumbo Barman

Roy Thomas

Mr Schubert

Raymond Mair

Headmaster

Ruth Ho Shing

Teacher

Rowan Byfield

Boatman

Dr Evan Auden

Dr Fox

Lloyd Samuels

Parson

Albert Walker

Inspector Williams

Anne Shneiderharn

Mrs Williams

Laurice Brown

Mrs Fox

Morris Roundtree

Captain of Cricket Team

Chris Kenney

German Lawyer

Fitzgerald Brown

Judge's Orderly

Valerie DeOkoro

Stenographer

Robert Goddard

Inga's Father

Aston Johnson

Bribed Official

Prissy

Prissy

Johnny

Johnny

Junior Hemmings

George Kellier

Carl Reid

Court Police

Kim Ornitz

Marnee K. Bie

Tourists

Leonie Forbes

Oliver Samuels

Michael London

Joey Clarke

Character Voices

Reggie Carter

Strongheart Tree Voice

8,480 feet

94 minutes

● A lesson in a Jamaican country school is disrupted by Aloysius, a lunatic. The headmaster and his dog throw him out, and he bumps into Busha, the local white landowner, who forbids him to talk to his prize cow as it is affecting her milk yield. Aloysius retires hurt to talk to his best friend, a tree, who advises him to learn the skill of photosynthesis as insurance against hunger.

The next day, he earns money to buy food by diving to pick up shells for tourists, falling asleep after his meal. Inga, a German tourist who is photographing the local fauna, particularly those plants with suggestive shapes, comes upon him in the woods. After Aloysius teaches her the Jamaican words for male ("hood") and female ("pum-pum") genitalia, she persuades him to become her guide. After she teaches him how to satisfy her prodigious sexual appetite, they happily travel the island together.

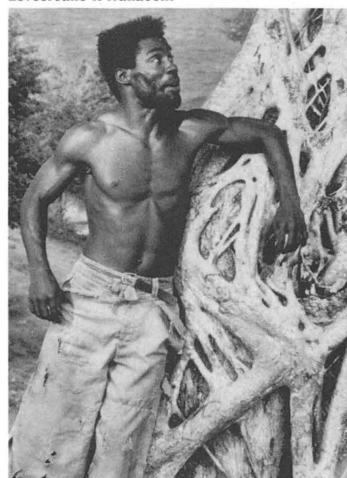
They meet Service, a butcher. Inga admires his artistry with a machete, and entices him into a *menage à trois* - "the rule of pum-pum" - which she dominates. Meanwhile Busha, who is obsessed with his own funeral arrangements, gets into a dispute with Linstrom, a wealthy black lawyer, while attempting to buy himself a mausoleum. Inga receives a letter from her father cutting off financial support, and devises a plan for Service and Aloysius to rob Busha's house. Service admits that he killed his father and has been involved in robberies. Aloysius is horrified but goes along with the plan because he loves Inga. His feelings of guilt are intensified when Busha fêtes him as the star of the annual village cricket match, where his ability to talk to the ball enables him to take eight wickets.

Next day, the robbery is in progress when Busha returns from church. Service tries to kill Busha but Aloysius saves him. Service pushes Aloysius away and raises his machete to strike again, but Busha's wife shoots him. At the burglars' joint trial, Linstrom defends Aloysius for free and, thanks to his manipulative skill, and Inga's truthful testimony, Service fails in his attempt to lie his way out of trouble. He is sent to prison; Inga is spirited away when her father bribes the jailer; and Aloysius is released into the custody of an affluent local widow, who promises to take charge of him.

● The idea of a feature film directed by Lol Creme does not entirely inspire eager anticipation. Following a rather cynical 70s pop career in the group 10CC, Creme, with his partner Kevin Godley, became one of the prime movers in the development of the promotional video. This medium, with its flashy effects and emphasis on style rather than substance, is not the best training ground for full-length features. But Creme's début effort *The Lunatic*, with its screenplay drawn by white Jamaican author Anthony C. Winkler from his own novel, is a surprisingly satisfying and



Loves: Julie T. Wallace...



...Paul Campbell and tree

entertaining work.

The film's vitality and charm is partly due to the quality of the dialogue, which is consistently amusing. But most credit should go to the actors, particularly Reggie Carter as the voice of the Tree, and Jamaican newcomer Paul Campbell, who is excellent in the leading role. The strength of their, and other, characterisations sustains emotional involvement even through *The Lunatic's* more burlesque passages. The locations are well-used too; the film looks and sounds agreeably lush without ever descending into Caribbean travelogue. The story shuffles its stereotypes around enough to keep things interesting, and the film even has some semi-serious points to make about sexual tourism: Aloysius complains, smiling, at one point that "The rule of pum-pum is worse tyranny than colonialism".

The humour has more than a touch of the *Carry Ons* about it, but it is sexuality itself, not just innuendo, that is celebrated. Julie T. Wallace (best known for her performance in the TV version of Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She Devil*) makes a valiant attempt to combine the aplomb of Hattie Jacques with the voracity of Sid James, and just about manages to make you overlook Inga's shaky German accent. The presence of a largely Jamaican cast and crew forestalls any suspicion that the film-makers' intentions towards the island and its people might be no less predatory than Inga's.

Ben Thompson

The Magic Riddle

Australia 1991

Director: Yoram Gross

Certificate

U

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Yoram Gross Films

With financial

assistance from

The Australian Film

Commission

Executive Producer

Sandra Gross

Producer

Yoram Gross

Production Manager

Jeanette Toms

Post-production

Supervisor

Rod Hay

Screenplay

Yoram Gross

Leonard Lee

John Palmer

Based on the stories

of Hans Christian

Andersen,

Carlo Lorenzini,

The Brothers Grimm

Camera Operators

Margaret Antoniak

Joseph Cabatuan

Joseph Dugonigs

Ngoc Minh Nguyen

Gary Price

Wayne Toms

In colour

Graphics

European Grey Optical

& Graphic

Animation Directors

Junko Aoyama

Sue Beak

Nobuko Burnfield

Nicholas Harding

Athol Henry

Animation Supervision

Cynthia Leech

Animation

Junko Aoyama

Sue Beak

Nobuko Burnfield

Patrick Burns

Jim Davis

Ariel Ferrari

Maurice Giacomini

Nicholas Harding

Athol Henry

Victor Johnson

Ray Nowland

Darek Pierkowski

Stella Wakil

Stanley Walker

Layouts

Sue Beak

Craig Handley

Nicholas Harding

Glen Lovett

◀ mother, the Widow. The latter is combing the house, trying to find the will left by Cindy's Grandfather before her stepdaughter. When one of Cindy's half-sisters, Eartha, finds Grandmother completing the chores, she is sworn to silence about the woodland home Grandmother keeps with seven wooden dwarfs. Next day at tea, Philippe is captivated by the serving Cindy, rather than by her ugly sisters Eartha and Bertha. Grandmother reappears at midnight, only to be chased away by the Widow and her two dogs.

Eartha gives Cindy a Red Riding Hood disguise to visit Grandmother, who struggles to remember Grandfather's magic riddle. In a saleswoman disguise suggested by her magic mirror, the Widow captures and imprisons Grandmother in the Castle of One Hundred Doors. Cindy flees a wolf in Grandmother's bed – another of the Widow's disguises. Seeing Philippe give Cindy a ring, the two sisters inform the Widow. Cindy flees to Grandmother's, where her kisses bring the wooden dwarfs and Pinnocchio to life.

In order to attend the Widow's masked ball, Cindy is given Pinnocchio's tiny shoes and a swan-shaped snow carriage which will vanish at midnight. At the ball, Eartha and Pinnocchio fall in love. Cindy – unrecognised by the Widow – dances with Philippe before leaving early with her companions. Discovering one of Pinnocchio's shoes, Philippe rides out to find the dwarfs' cottage. But the Widow gets there first, disguised as a long-nosed witch with an apple, and convinces Pinnocchio that she is his mother. She hypnotises Pinnocchio and then sends Cindy to sleep.

Overcoming the Widow, Pinnocchio hastens to the Castle of One Hundred Doors, where a nail snags his shoe. Following the untravelling lace, he and the dwarfs are able to escape with Grandmother. When she wakes up, Cindy refuses to marry Philippe without a dowry. Grandmother then remembers the magic riddle: "Pinnocchio knows". Philippe unscrews Pinnocchio's nose: the will inside reveals that Grandfather's bequest will revert from the

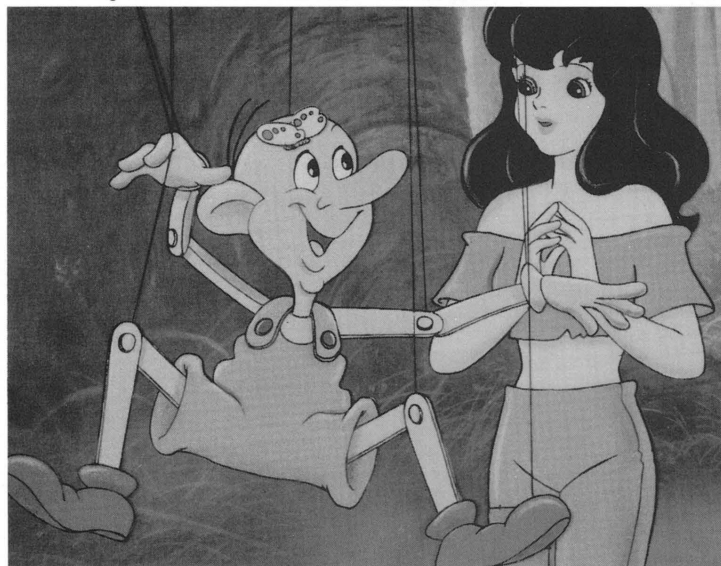
Widow to Cindy when Cindy marries. Wedding bells ring for Cindy and Philippe. Their task of helping others complete, the dwarfs and Pinnocchio return to wood, as Grandfather decreed. But Pinnocchio's loss saddens Eartha, so he comes back to life.

● While its title suggests a conventional (if hitherto untold) fairytale, the plot of *The Magic Riddle* plunders so many familiar stories in its hotchpotch of a script that there's little chance of any coherent narrative emerging. Cinderella is evoked more than any other source, providing – in addition to main protagonist Cindy – two ugly sisters, a wicked stepmother (here referred to mainly as the Widow), a handsome stranger, a carriage conjured by magic which collapses after midnight and, finally, a ball.

But more is thrown into the mix from other sources: Pinnocchio; Seven Dwarfs, a magic mirror and an apple-bearing witch to send the heroine into an enchanted sleep; Grandmother (complete with woodland cottage), Little Red Riding Hood and a wolf hiding in wait in bed. Filler elements include the Ugly Duckling and the Three Little Pigs, the former glimpsed in a cage on the back of Cindy's horse and trap during the opening thunderstorm, while the latter appear in a farmyard scene with even less plot relevance.

With so many plot threads, it's not surprising that the film often seems to be tying up the wrong ones at the wrong moment. The Castle of One Hundred Doors, for example, is an excuse to dump Grandmother for most of the final hour, though she manages to escape just after one of the dwarfs has pronounced "No one escapes from the Castle of One Hundred Doors". Even the eponymous riddle is brushed aside in a few lines of dialogue. The animation is as lacklustre as one would expect from an exercise described as "an enchanted animated tale filled with romance, drama and suspense", and the proceedings are stretched to a numbing 94 minutes with several uninspired songs.

Jeremy Clarke



Overmixed: Pinnocchio meets Cinderella

The Mambo Kings

USA 1992

Director: Arne Glimcher

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

In association with Le Studio Canal +/Regency

Entertainment/Alcor Films

Executive Producer

Steven Reuther

Producers

Arnon Milchan

Arne Glimcher

Co-producer

Jack B. Bernstein

Associate Producer

Anna Reinhardt

Production Controller

Sharon Perl

Production Co-ordinator

Barbara A. Hall

Unit Production Manager

Mark Allan

Location Manager

Karen White

Casting

Billy Hopkins

Suzanne Smith

Additional:

Rick Montgomery

Dan Parada

Dixie Webster

Associate:

Ann Goulder

Extras:

The Casting Group

Assistant Directors

Benjamin Rosenberg

Michael Samson

Jan S. Ballhaus

Screenplay

Cynthia Cidre

Based on the novel

The Mambo Kings

Play Songs of Love

by Oscar Hijuelos

Director of Photography

Michael Ballhaus

Colour

DeLuxe

Prints by Technicolor

Camera Operator

David Dunlap

Additional Optical

The Effects House

Editor

Claire Simpson

Associate Editor

Judy Silberstein

Production Designer

Stuart Wurtzel

Art Director

Steve Saklad

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Patti Safian

Set Design

Philip Toolin

John P. Bruce

Set Decorator

Kara Lindstrom

On-set Dresser

Ernest M. Sanchez

Storyboard Artist

Kalina Ivanov

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

M. Kam Cooney

Special Effects

Pacific Title

Music

Robert Kraft

Carlos Franzetti

Mambo Arrangements

Ray Santos

Executive Music Producer

Robert Kraft

Supervising Music Editor

Thomas Drescher

Music Editors

David Carbonara

Christopher Kennedy

Music Co-ordinator

Robin Urdang

Songs

"Mambo Caliente"

by and performed

by Arturo Sandoval;

"Beautiful Maria of My

Soul" by Robert Kraft,

Arne Glimcher, "Tanga,

Rumba-Afro-Cubana"

by Mario Bauza,

"Sunny Ray" by Ray

Santos, "Tea for Two"

by Vincent Youmans,

Irving Caesar,

"Mambo Gallego"

by Tito Puente,

"Ponce" by Noro

Morales, performed

by Mambo All-Stars;

"La Dicha Mia"

by Johnny Pacheco,

"Melao de Cana"

by Mercedes Pedrosa,

"Guantanamera"

by Fernandez Diaz,

performed by Celia

Cruz; "Ran Kan Kan",

"Para Los Rumberos"

by Tito Puente,

"Cuban Pete" by José

Norman, performed

by Tito Puente; "In

a Sentimental Mood"

by and performed

by Duke Ellington;

"Quiereme Mucho" by

Gonzalo Roig, Augustin

Rodriguez, "Perfidia"

by Alberto Dominguez,

performed by Linda

Ronstadt; "Como Fue"

by Ernesto Duarte

Brito, "Ahora Soy Tan

Feliz" by Beny Moré,

"Mucho Corazon"

by Emma Elena

Valdelamar, performed

by Beny Moré; "You

Belong to Me" by R.

Stewart, P.W. King,

C. Price, performed by

Jo Stafford; "Sh-Boom"

by James Keyes, Carl

Feaster, Floyd McRae,

Claude Feaster,

performed by The

Crew Cuts; "I Love Lucy

Theme" by Harold

Adamson, Eliot Daniel;

"I Can't Give You

Anything But Love" by

Dorothy Fields, Jimmy

McHugh, performed

by Joe Loco; "Beautiful

Maria of My Soul"

by Robert Kraft, Arne

Glimcher, performed

by Los Lobos

Choreography

Michael Peters

Ballroom:

Kim Blank

Costume Design

Ann Roth

Gary Jones

Bridget Kelly

Costume Supervisor

Bruce Eriksen

Costumers

Cheryl Beasley-

Blackwell

Donna Maloney

David Mayreis

Make-up

Designer:

Valli O'Reilly

Artist:

Dennis Glass

Titles

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Michael Kirchberger

Sound Editors

Neil L. Kaufman

Bitty O'Sullivan-Smith

Elliot Deitch

Anthony Ciccolini III

Supervising ADR Editor

Jane McCulley

ADR Editors

Antonio Martinez

Harry Peck Bolles

Sound Recordists

Susumu Tokunow

Music:

Michael Golub

Michael Farrow

Frank Wolf

Shawn Murphy

Foley Recordist

Dominick Tavella

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Lee Dichter

Sound Effects Editor

Eugene Gearty

Foley Artists

Elisha Birnbaum

Brian Vancho

Advisers

Technical: Joe Conzo

Josephine Powell

Frank Grillo

Historical: Max Salazar

Consultants

Project:

Oscar Hijuelos

Dialect:

Gabriel Riera

Music:

Johnny Pacheco

Ray Santos

Research:

Pedro Aguilar

"Cuban Pete"

Milly Donay

Charlie Canderlaria

Peter Aguilar

Brett Golin

Production Assistants

Eric R. Jacobson

Bryan Constans

Ellen Glimcher

Edward Bates

Bill McLaren

Carlos Montaner

Luke Reichle

Lester Ayala

Stunt Co-ordinator

Paul Baxley

Cast

Armand Assante

Cesar Castillo

Antonio Banderas

Nestor Castillo

Cathy Moriarty

Lanna Lake

Maruschka Detmers

Delores Fuentes

Pablo Calogero

Ramon

Scott Cohen

Bernardito

Mario Grillo

Mario

Ralph Irizarry

Pito

Pete MacNamara

Johnny Bing

Jimmy Medina



Soul: Maruschka Detmers, Antonio Banderas

joins the famous Tito Puente band at the leading Palladium club for an impromptu percussion work-out.

This not only leads to further offers of work but also impresses cigarette girl Lanna Lake, with whom Cesar soon starts an affair. Nestor, meanwhile, begins a liaison with Delores Fuentes, a domestic cleaner and would-be teacher who shares his ideals of self-improvement through education. But their romance doesn't quite erase Nestor's memories of his lost love, and he continues to compose a haunting bolero, "Beautiful Maria of My Soul".

The brothers' hastily assembled band, The Mambo Kings, plays its highly successful first gig. But when Cesar rejects the overtures of powerful promoter Fernando Perez, their subsequent appearances are limited to private parties. Delores encourages her prospective husband Nestor to consider getting his own club. The brothers' career prospects receive an unexpected lift, however, when television star and fellow Cuban Desi Arnaz hears the duo perform "Beautiful Maria" and invites them to appear on the *I Love Lucy* show.

Although the Castillos now reach the pinnacle of success, tensions between them come to a head over the latent attraction between Cesar and Delores, and Nestor's resentment that his talent has been exploited to fuel his brother's show-business ambitions. At long last, The Mambo Kings achieve headline status at The Palladium, but on the drive home from the concert, Nestor dies in a car crash. Devastated by the loss, Cesar nevertheless remains true to his brother's dream by buying a bar of his own, the Club Havana. On the opening night, at Delores' behest, he sings "Beautiful Maria of My Soul".

● The *Mambo Kings*, adapted from Oscar Hijuelos' Pulitzer Prize-winning second novel, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, marks the directorial debut of one-time art dealer, now movie producer (Gorillas in the Mist, The Good Mother), Arne Glimcher. His Pace Gallery has long been among New York's most notable exhibition spaces, and here Glimcher swiftly announces his confidence with another kind of frame. As Cesar Castillo and the Tito Puente band drive the dancers on the floor at The Palladium to a loose-limbed frenzy, the camera's deft movement through the action, and some

judiciously sprung cutting against the beat, underscore the excitement with the kind of cinematic brio that the late Bob Fosse might have applauded.

With Armand Assante and Almodóvar regular Antonio Banderas (in his first English-speaking role) convincingly integrated into the Mambo Kings' milieu, the likes of Puente and the formidable Celia Cruz popping up to play their younger selves, and Desi Arnaz Jr happily cast as his own father, the film-makers have nicely captured Hijuelos' distinctive cultural moment. Writing a new "Beautiful Maria of My Soul" especially for the occasion, and giving the music its due throughout, Glimcher would seem to be as capable as anyone of transposing this zesty material to celluloid. Yet the rhythm of the act of love is as important in the original as the chatter of the timbales, something to which the odd R-rated image of writhing limbs can scarcely do justice.

Narrated from the vantage point of Cesar's old age, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* is to a large extent about the potent and lasting effects that early sexual experiences leave. By reducing the element of sensuality, *The Mambo Kings* tends to flatten out the story's dramatic contrasts, inevitably perhaps once the decision had also been taken to drop Hijuelos' elaborate flashback structure and concentrate on the linear development of the Castillos' qualified success story.

What's more, although apparently sanctioned by the author, this means the loss of important developments in the novel's second half, in which Cesar becomes something of a Michael Corleone figure, ravaged by remorse over a brother's death and, ironically, just as dogged by memory as Nestor once was. Glimcher's final image sums up his film's strengths and weaknesses: a freeze frame of Assante as he sings "Beautiful Maria of My Soul" on the stage of his own Club Havana. As far as it goes, it is sensitively judged, conveying a bittersweet blend of sadness and fulfillment; yet for admirers of the novel, it won't be quite the full picture.

Trevor Johnston



Exhibition: Antonio Banderas, Armand Assante

Medicine Man

USA 1992

Director: John McTiernan

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Guilford

Production Company

Cinergi Productions

Executive Producer

Sean Connery

Producers

Andrew G. Vajna

Donna Dubrow

Line Producer

Beau Marks

Production Supervisor

Joel Marx

Production Co-ordinators

Mary Lou Devlin

Emily Gamboa

Production Manager

Roberto Bakker

Unit Production Managers

Mexico:

Anna Roth

LA:

Jerry Sobul

Post-production Supervisor

Tamara Smith

2nd Unit Director

Fred Waugh

Costing

Bonnie Timmermann

Associate:

Jeffrey Block

Mexico:

Claudia Becker

Brazil:

Carmen Gomez

Assistant Directors

Tom Mack

David Kelley

Mexico:

Sebastian Silva

Guillermo "Memo" Carreno

Screenplay

Tom Schulman

Sally Robinson

Story

Tom Schulman

Director of Photography

Donald McAlpine

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Robert Agganis

Guillermo "Memo" Rosas

Optical Effects

Pacific Title

& Art Studio

Additional:

R/Greenberg Associates

Apogee Productions

Editors

Michael R. Miller

Additional:

Mary Jo Markey

Production Designer

John Krenz

Reinhart Jnr

Art Directors

Don Diers

Jesus Buenrostro

Brazilian Indian:

Marlisi Storch

Set Decorator

Enrique Estevez

Storyboard Artist

Michael Davis

Special Effects Supervisors

John Thomas

Laurencio Cordero

"Chovy"

Special Effects Tree Climber

Socorro Carvajal

Music/Music Director

Jerry Goldsmith

Local Music Supervisor

Junior Homrich

Music Editor

Ken Hall

Authentic Ritual Music

Xavante Nation

Song

"That Old Black Magic"

by John H. Mercer,

Harold Arlen

Costume Design

Marilyn Vance-Straker

Brazilian Indian:

Rita Murtimho

Costume Supervisor

Hugo Pena

Costumers

Set:

Adolfo Ramirez

Sean Connery:

Hans Struhar

Lorraine Bracco:

Amy Endries

Brazilian Indian:

Beatriz Salgado

Joao Luis Calado

Araujo

Make-up

Supervisor:

James R. Kail

Artist:

Raul Sarmiento

Lorraine Bracco:

Frank Carrisosa

Brazilian Indian:

Jacque Monteiro

Title Design

Saxon/Ross Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

George H. Anderson

Sound Editors

Lucy Coldsnow

Christopher Flick

David Giammarco

David Kulczycki

Cindy Marty

Lauren J. Palmer

John Joseph Thomas

Hugo Weng

Supervising ADR Editor

Corinne Sessarego

ADR Editors

Rosemary Wheeler

Maciek Malish

Robert Heffernan

Sound Recordists

Douglas B. Arnold

Robert Renga

Music:

Michael Ross

ADR Recordists

Italy:

Kevin Carpenter

Battista Mariani

New York:

Paul Zydel

Michael Cerone

Foley Recordists

Tommy Goodwin

Tami Treadwell

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Doug Greenfield

Sound Re-recordists

Sergio Reyes

Chris David

Richard Overton

Post-sync Dialogue

Norman B. Schwartz

Foley

Terry Burke

Visual Effects Consultant

Joel Hynek

Production Assistants

Garret Chambers

Michael Pierson

Francisco "Paco" Yanez

Post-production:

Bekki Misiorowski

Shawn Martin

Ann-Giselle Spiegler

Stunt Co-ordinators

Fred Waugh

Rafael Valdez

Stunts

Gustavo Campos

Jorge Luis Corzo

Julio Martinez

John Ryan

Gil Torres

Jennifer Watson

Animal Handlers
Miguel Gurza
Humberto Gurza
Ivette Gurza
Domingo Canales
Espinosa

Cast

Sean Connery

Dr Robert Campbell

Lorraine Bracco

Dr Rae Crane

José Wilker

Dr Miguel Ornela

Rodolfo de Alexandre

Tanaki

Francisco Tsirene Tserere
Jahausa
Elias Monteiro da Silva
Palala
Edinei Maria Serrio Dos Santos
Kalana
Bec-Kana-Re Dos Santos
Kalapa
Imana
Angelo Barra Moreira
Medicine Man
José Lavat
Government Man

9,444 feet
105 minutes

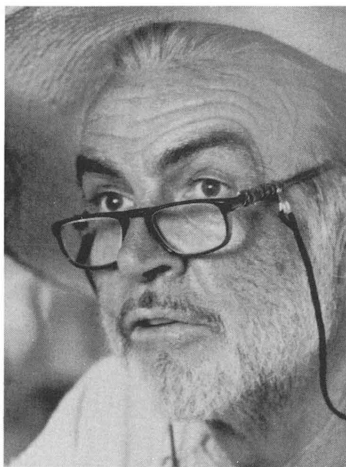
● Dr. Rae Crane travels to a remote research station in the South American rain forest, bringing equipment to Dr. Robert Campbell, an embittered biochemist who has gone native as the medicine man of an isolated tribe. Crane arrives while Campbell is drunkenly presiding over a tribal celebration, and takes an immediate dislike to him. Campbell has become a self-pitying wreck since he accidentally caused the destruction of another tribe when he stumbled across a herbal pain-killer, the manufacture of which brought the tribe into lethal contact with a Western disease.

Crane, who has the authority to close down Campbell's operation, is astounded when the latter demonstrates, using guinea-pigs, that an extract from a plant that grows a hundred feet up in this one small area can be used as a cancer cure, and that he has personally cured a native woman. However, analysis of the plant reveals that the extract, prepared by the last medicine man - who has retreated from the tribe in a sulk because Campbell has taken his position - cannot be duplicated.

Campbell and Crane go on a perilous journey to visit the medicine man, and Campbell humiliates himself asking for help, which is now urgent because the original patient's son has come down with cancer too. The medicine man tells them that the plant is only a home for insects. The two return to the tribe, and a conflict arises when Campbell wants to use the last of the serum to save the child while Crane insists that it be saved for future research. Finally, Crane cracks and administers the drug, saving the child.

The next morning, they discover partly by accident that the missing factor in the extract is the excreta of the insects who live in the plant, and which the scientists have been cleaning out. However, the whole village, and the plant's only known habitat, is instantly wiped out by the arrival of a road-building gang who start a fire which devastates the area. When the tribe moves on, Campbell joins them and Crane, deciding not to return to civilisation, opts to stay with him.

● Given that it was one of the famous 'million-dollar' on-spec scripts, it is surprising to find *Medicine Man* such an aimless and loosely constructed picture. The air of pointlessness that clings to the project can be summarised by its collection of ►



Anthropological: Sean Connery

◀ uncompleted narrative strands: the leading characters find but lose the cure for cancer, try but fail to save the tribe's homeland, and make a commitment to each other but never consummate their relationship. The contradictory, contrived way in which the film sets up its central medical problem could serve as a classic definition of a McGuffin: from the fact that the plant grows at a great height, which allows for Tarzanian rope-swinging and gorgeous views of primal splendour, to the way the original patient's son has come down with precisely the same type of cancer and the fact that it can apparently be wiped out magically by a single injection.

John McTiernan, whose anthropological interests have been in suspension since his first film, *Nomads*, reunites with Sean Connery after *The Hunt for Red October*, perhaps hoping for another popular combination of genre tricks and topical subject matter. But if the earlier film boiled down to sombre men conversing in dark rooms, this devolves into a shrill blend of *The African Queen* and *Indiana Jones* as a pony-tailed Connery and an unhelpfully cast Lorraine Bracco yell at each other while falling in love, each harping on a single character trait (Campbell's guilt, Crane's Bronx accent). They meanwhile go through such traditional jungle-movie sequences as that in which the tenderfoot is forced by grinning tribespeople to eat disgusting things, the dangle at the edge of a precipice, and the wild abandon of a native ceremony.

A more modish instant cliché (cf *The Emerald Forest*) is thrown in for the finale as chugging, smoke-disgorging evil bulldozers wreck everything in the duller imaginable image of the despoilation of nature by civilisation. Quite apart from the fact that any evil capitalist corporation would doubtless be more persuaded by the offer of a monopoly on a cure for cancer than by drunken scuffling with workmen, this last-minute bring-down is mainly functional in that it gets some desperately needed action into the finish, allowing McTiernan finally to show off his proven skills as the lone hero valiantly struggles in the vast dark with monster machines.

Kim Newman

Memoirs of an Invisible Man

USA 1992

Director: John Carpenter

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Companies

Warner Bros
A Cornelius production
In association with
Le Studio Canal +/
Regency Enterprises/
Alcor Films

Executive Producer

Annon Milchan

Producers

Bruce Bodner

Dan Kolsrud

Production Co-ordinator

Karen Shaw

Unit Production Manager

Arthur Seidel

Location Managers

San Francisco:

John Lehane

LA:

Lisa Blok-Linson

Casting

Sharon Howard-Field

Associate:

Susan Peck

Assistant Directors

William M. Elvin

Alan Edmisten

Orie Brown

Arlene Fukai

Kurt C. Hodenfield

Screenplay

Robert Collector

Dana Olsen

William Goldman

Based on the novel

by H.F. Saint

Director of Photography

William A. Fraker

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

Effects Camera

Photography

Steve Reding

Optical Photography

Supervisor:

Bruce Vecchitto

Camera Operators:

Keith Johnson

James Lim

Kenneth Smith

Camera Operators

David Diano

B:

Richard Turner

Key Visual Effects:

Marty Rosenberg

Visual Effects:

Ray Gilbert

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light

& Magic

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Bruce Nicholson

Producer:

Ned Gorman

Production Liaison:

Dennis Michelson

Chief Editor:

Bill Kimberlin

Editors:

Tim Eaton

Ron Fode

Art Director:

Mark Moore

Visual Effects/Plate

Co-ordinator

Camille Cellucci

Optical Line-up

Jennifer Lee

Thomas Rosseter

Kristen Trattner

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Stuart Robertson

Artists:

Barbara Brennan

Gregory Gorsiski

Jim Hagedorn

Laurel Klick

Greg Maloney

Thomas J. Smith

Digital/Scanning

Joshua Pines

James M. Goodman

Jill Brooks

Matte

Supervisor:

Jim Danforth

Artist:

Chris Evans

Matscenes

Effects Associates, Inc

Computer Graphics

Doug Zeffer

Brett Bentley

Supervisor:

Doug Smythe

Animators:

Stephen Rosenbaum

Scott E. Anderson

Computer Effects

Supervisor

Steve Grumette

Miniature Construction

The Garden of Allah

Modelshop Project

Supervisor

Tad Krzanowski

Chief Model Makers

Steve Gawley

Chris Goehle

Chris Reed

Rotoscope

Supervisor:

Ellen Mueller

Artists:

Sandy Houston

Terry Molatore

Animation

Supervisor:

Wes Ford Takahashi

Effects:

Jay Cotton

Chris Green

Stop Motion:

Harry Walton

Editor

Marion Rothman

Production Designer

Lawrence G. Paul

Art Director

Bruce Crone

Set Design

Elizabeth Lapp

Lauren Polizzi

Gerald Sigmon

Art Department

Researcher

Stephanie

Schwartzman

Set Decorator

Rick Simpson

Conceptual Design

Benton Jew

Illustrator

Marty Kline

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Ken Pepiot

Special Effects Foreman

Albert Delgado

Special Effects

Larz Anderson

A.J. Thrasher

Dan Sudick

Wayne Ruppeck

Music

Shirley Walker

Additional Orchestration

Larry Rench

Lisa Bloom

Bruce Fowler

Synthesizer Programmer

Hans Zimmer

Music Editor

Thomas Milano

Costume Design

Joe Tompkins

Costume Supervisors

Roberto M. Carneiro

Kathy Moderine

Costumers

Men:

Steve Ellsworth

Women:

Adrianna Bernard

Annie Pollard

Make-up Artists

Rick Sharp

Lee Harmon

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

John Leveque

Gordon Ecker

Sound Editors

Richard E. Yawn

Hector Gika

Anthony Milch

John Kwiatkowski

Bruce Fortune

Kim Secrist

Bob Bradshaw

Rocky Moriana

Glenn Hoskinson

Don Warner

Supervising ADR Editor

Becky Sullivan

ADR Editor

Holly Huckins

Foley Supervisor

Scott D. Jackson

Foley Editors

Shawn Sykora

Leslie Gaulin

Steve Schwalbe

Sound Recordists

Jim Alexander

Music:

Robert Fernandez

Doug Botnick

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordinists

Robert J. Litt

Greg P. Russell

Elliot Tyson

Sound Effects

Gary Bluffer

John Davis

Foley Artists

John Roesch

Kathy Rowe

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Jamda

Stunts

Simone Boisseree

Brad Bovee

Troy Brown

Kurt Bryant

Kerrie Cullen

Jeff Dashnaw

Shane Dixon

Jim Halty

Jimmy Jue

Henry Kingi

Gary McLarty

Alan Oliney

Cris Thomas-Palomino

Chuck Picerni Jnr

Louis J. Ramirez IV

Chad Randall

John Robotham

Dan Rogers

Thomas Rosales Jnr

Bill Saito

Jeff Smolek

Cheryl Wheeler-Dixon

Dick Ziker

Animal Trainer

Paul Calabria

Helicopter Pilot

Jim Deeth

Cast

Chevy Chase

Nick Holloway

Daryl Hannah

Alice Monroe

Sam Neill

David Jenkins

Michael McKean

George Talbot

Stephen Tobolowsky

Warren Singleton

Jim Norton

Dr Bernard Wachs

Pat Skipper

Morrissey

Paul Perri

Gomez

Richard Epcar

Tyler

</

Missing Pieces

USA 1991

Director: Leonard Stern

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
Aaron Russo
Entertainment

Executive Producer
William C. Carraro

Producer
Aaron Russo

Associate Producer
Bill Carraro

Production Co-ordinators
Jody Milano
Denise Kordan

Unit Production Managers
Lou Fusaro
Bill Carraro

Location Managers
Paul Marcus
Lansing Parker

Post-production Supervisor
Kerry Orent

Casting
Associates:
Jessica Gilburne
David Giella
Extras:
Lou Digiamo
& Associates
The Casting Group

Assistant Directors
Alex Hapsas
Dan Stillman

Screenplay
Leonard Stern

Director of Photography
Peter Stein
In colour

Camera Operator
Tony Cutrono

Editor
Evan Lottman

Production Designer
Michael Z. Hanan

Art Director
Mark Zuelske

Set Decorator
Doug Mowat

Master Scenic
Wayne Daddio

Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Cliff Wenger

Special Effects
Kevin Harris

Music
Marvin Hamlisch

Music Extracts
"Serenade, Opus
No. 8" by Ludwig van
Beethoven; "Light
Cavalry Overture"
by Franz von Suppe

Orchestrations
Torie Zito

Music Editor
Joseph S. Debeasi

Song
"High Energy" by
Marvin Hamlisch, David
Zippel, performed by
Eric Idle, Robert Wuhl

Costume Design
Bobbie Read

Wardrobe
Designer NY:
Mary Ellen Winston

Supervisors:
Bill Luger
Laura Goldsmith

Make-up Artist
Marilyn Carbone

Supervising Sound Editor
Ron Bochar

Sound Editors
Laura Civiello
Jeffrey Stern

ADR Editor
Hal Levinsohn

Foley Editor
Bruce Pross

Sound Recordist
Bill Daly

ADR Recordist
Paul Zydel

Sound Re-recordist
Rick Dior

Sound Effects
C-S, Inc

Foley
Design:
C-S, Inc
Artist:
Nancy Linden

Stunt Co-ordinator
Joe Dunne

Stunts
Bob Brown
Don Picard
Frank Ferrara
Jery Hewitt
Bill Anagnos
Donna Evans
Paul Lane
John Epstein
Tim Gallin
Roy Eugene Harrison
Janet Paparazzo
Deborah Watkins
Terry Jackson
Gil Combs
Dana Bertollette
Tracy Keehn-Dashnaw
Perry Brandt
Gregg Smrz
Paul Bucosi
Joe Fitos
Chris Howell
Gino Lucchi
Victor Paul

Animal Trainer
Carl Miller

Cast
Eric Idle
Wendel Dickens
Robert Wuhl
Lou Wimpole
Lauren Hutton
Jennifer
Bob Gunton
Mr Gabor
Richard Belzer
Baldesari
Bernie Kopell
Dr Gutman
Kim Lankford
Sally
Don Gibb
Hurrudnik
Leslie Jordan
Krause
Louis Zorich
Ochenko
Don Hewitt
Scarface
John De Lancie
Paul/Walter Thackery
James Hong
Chang
Janice Lynde
Marion
Mary Fogarty
Mrs Callahan
Bruce Kronenberg
Chauffeur
Stacey Ann Logan
Elissa
Derek Meader
Joseph
Mansoor Najeullah
Street Vendor
Kate Stern
Myra Gluckman
Paul Keith
Bride's Father
Sharon Brown
Bernice
Andrea Garfield
Nurse
Darryl Chan
Young Chinese Man
Louise Troy
Mrs Waldham
Gloria Strock
Woman at Concert
Leonard Stern
Man at Concert
Richard Kwong
Chinese Man
Kellie Jo Tackett
Receptionist
Lou Myers
Attendant
Rick Zumwalt
Mountain Man
Alisa McCullough
Dog Walker

8,322 feet
92 minutes

New York. Wendel Dickens, recently fired from a greeting-card company for composing funny sympathy cards, nearly runs over Lou Wimpole, an out-of-work cellist, and they become friends. Returning to Wendel's apartment, they come across an intruder, private detective Baldesari, who warns them that their lives are in danger from the sinister Scarface, who is looking for something Wendel supposedly possesses.

Soon after, Wendel is contacted by a Mr Krause about an inheritance. Krause subsequently informs Wendel (who, as an orphan, has already lost five sets of foster parents) that he has been bequeathed a legacy by a benefactor in Los Angeles, Mr Who. This turns out to be a piece of paper containing a cryptic riddle, a clue to the whereabouts of a valuable antiquity. While trying to make sense of the riddle, Wendel and Lou are offered £25,000 for their inheritance by Mr Gabor, who threatens to have them killed if they don't comply.

Another clue, from Baldesari - whom the pair find rapidly expiring in their car boot - points them in the direction of Los Angeles. By this time, they have also learned, inadvertently, what it is that Scarface and Gabor are chasing: a priceless ornamental dagger. In Los Angeles, they stay with Lou's friend Jennifer. While Wendel and Jennifer are instantly taken with each other, Lou is surprised by the appearance of his ex-wife Sally. Wendel and Lou visit Dr Gutman, who performed

the autopsy on Mr Who, and information he gives them about the death certificate then leads to Chang's Fortune Cookie Shop in Chinatown.

Here the riddle is explained and Wendel is saved from another assailant by Jennifer. When Lou and Wendel eventually find the dagger, they are confronted by everyone else who has been hunting it. Krause and Gabor are shot; Wendel and Dr Gutman fight it out on a crane high above the freeway. While Lou battles with Scarface, the latter is killed by the dagger which Gutman drops just before he falls to his own death. Subsequently, Wendel and Jennifer watch Lou conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, which he has just bought.

The hook for this formulaic comedy-thriller is that Opposites Attract. More than that, it's that *Missing Pieces* is a fun film because the stars who play opposite each other are, in themselves, attractive. Unfortunately, the rather over-eager claims made in the film's press notes for both the actors and the characters they play already prompts misgivings: "When I read the script it was clearly funny", says Eric Idle. "I liked the contrasting optimistic and pessimistic characters". The over-statement is perhaps understandable, given Idle's patchy success next to Robbie Coltrane in *Nuns on the Run*, and the fact that Robert Wuhl's previous cameos (in *Batman*, *Good Morning, Vietnam* and elsewhere) have hardly added new meaning to the concept of

charisma.

But apart from the film's failure as slapstick, what is most limiting about *Missing Pieces* is that the opposites who are supposed to attract seem very much of a piece. They share the same sex, sexuality, age, class and taste (Wendel hangs Monet on his wall, Lou leans toward the New York Philharmonic). Neither is forced to confront differences of attitude or opportunity, and the comedy routines are all to do with the pursuit of wealth. Eric Idle, with his faded, faraway look, is actually well-suited to the role of the combination innocent and menace. Against this, the way Idle uses his body is sometimes very cumbersome, as in the early bathroom scene where Wendel tries to talk on the phone and brush his teeth at the same time.

Most curious, given the 'fortune-hunting' theme, is that while Lou gets to live out his dream, Wendel's future is left uncertain. As if acknowledging the character's crippled infantilism (evident in the scene where he is jumped by Jennifer and becomes infatuated, or where he inadvertently gets drunk on wine), he is, in the last shot, left sitting passively in an audience. In the previous scene, he shouts a heartfelt "Sorry!" to the murderous Dr Gutman as he falls to his death. It's Wendel's most endearingly childish line, and a funny lapse in what is meant to be a thrilling climax. But the laugh is a one-off, and like Wendel - and the film - it really has nowhere to go.

Julian Stringer



Nowhere to go: Eric Idle

The Playboys

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Gillies MacKinnon

Certificate
12

Distributor
Samuel Goldwyn
Production Company
Green Umbrella Films
For Samuel Goldwyn Company

Producers
William P. Cartledge
Simon Perry
Production Supervisor
Loretta Ordwer
Production Co-ordinator
Marlyse Morgan
Production Manager
Gemma Fallon
Location Manager
Mark Huffman

Casting
Irene Lamb
Pam Dixon

Assistant Directors
Chris Carreras
Seamus Collins
Ted Cartledge
Screenplay
Shane Connaughton
Kerry Crabbe
Director of Photography
Jack Conroy
Technicolor
Camera Operator
Des Whelan
Editor
Humphrey Dixon
Production Designer
Andy Harris
Art Director
Arden Gantly
Special Effects Supervisor
Gerry Johnston

Music
Jean-Claude Petit
Songs
"Shake Rattle and Roll"
by Chas Calhoun,
performed by John
Smith; "Only You" by
Buck Ram, Andy Rand,
performed by Bill
Brown; "Down by the
Sally Gardens" (trad.),
words by W.B. Yeats;
"Marching through
Georgia" by Henry C.
Work; "The Sweetest of
May", "Lament for
Owain Ruaidh O'Neill",
"Faith of Our Fathers",
"The Croppy Boy",
"Polly Wolly Doodle"
(trad.)

Costume Design
Consolata Boyle
Wardrobe Supervisor
Mark Holmes
Chief Make-up
Rosie Blackmore
Titles/Opticals
General Screen
Enterprises
Sound Editor
Alan Bell

Foley Editor
Tony Message
Sound Recordist
Peter Lindsay
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
Gerry Humphreys
Stunt Co-ordinator
Pat Condon
Stunt Doubles
Brendan Condon
Denise Lillie
Film Extracts
The Westerner (1940)
Wuthering Heights (1939)
Wonderman (1945)

Cast
Albert Finney
Hegarty
Aidan Quinn
Tom
Robin Wright
Tara Maguire
Milo O'Shea
Freddie
Alan Devlin
Malone
Niamh Cusack
Brigid
Ian McElhinney
Cassidy
Stella McCusker
Rachel
Niall Buggy
Denzil
Anna Livia Ryan
Vonnice
Adrian Dunbar
Mick
Lorcan Cranitch
Rory (John Joe)
Aine Ni Mhuiri
Mrs Smith
Doreen Hepburn
Nuala Ryan
Kilian McKenna
Sean
Michele Forbes
Maggie Rudden
P.J. Brady
McMahon
Tony Rohr
Kelly
Niall O'Brien
Police Superintendent
Pat Laffan
Duffy
Brian O'Leary
Timmy
Stephen Holland
Richie
Jimmy Keogh
Liam
Shane Connaughton
Customs Officer
Peter Morris
James Morris
Tara's Baby
Pat Fallon
Magician

9,786 feet
109 minutes

Southern Ireland, 1957. Tara Maguire is an independent young woman who runs a small village shop with her sister Brigid, while also occasionally smuggling goods over the Irish border. She shocks her fellow villagers when she has an illegitimate baby and refuses to name the father. The local policeman Hegarty is infatuated with her, as is Mick, a young farmer. But business is going badly for Mick and he shoots himself. The village priest Malone blames Tara for bringing a curse upon the community and urges her to marry. One night, Hegarty bumps into Tara while she is on one of

her delivery runs. He proposes to her but she refuses. The arrival of The Playboys, a travelling troupe led by entrepreneur Freddie, promises to cheer up the villagers. Tom, one of the actors, takes a fancy to Tara and the feeling appears to be mutual, much to the disgust of Hegarty. On one of her journeys to the border, Tara is handed a parcel to give to Cassidy, an actor in the troupe.

In a bid to win Tara, Hegarty makes a crib for her baby. She refuses the gift, and he burns it. Hegarty is informed by his superior that an IRA cell is operating on the nearby border. At harvest time, the villagers and the actors all pitch in, but Hegarty is exceptionally cool to Tom. Later Hegarty tells Tom that he is the father of Tara's child. Tom confronts Tara, who admits that she became pregnant after a one-night stand with Hegarty, whom she could never love. They ride off into the countryside and are spotted by two villagers, who later inform Hegarty. The policeman, who has been battling against alcoholism, starts drinking again and decides to incriminate Tom. He discovers some boys playing with explosives found in the actors' digs and subsequently arrests Tom for IRA involvement. Tara visits Tom in prison and sets him free, despite Hegarty's protestations. Meanwhile, Cassidy has disappeared.

For their last night in the village, The Playboys put on a production of *Gone with the Wind*. The show is disrupted when Brigid arrives with the news that Hegarty has stolen Tara's baby. In a confrontation with Hegarty, Tara grabs the baby back, but a fight ensues between Tom and Hegarty as the whole village looks on. Next day, the heartbroken and shamefaced Hegarty packs his bags and leaves. Tara and the baby join Tom and The Playboys when they return to Dublin.

"There's enough passion here to fuel a rocket to the moon", comments Freddie (Milo O'Shea, giving a full throttle performance) as he and the villagers watch Tara's suitors Hegarty and Tom slug it out on the village green. Histrionics, perhaps, but little passion is in evidence here. *The Playboys* is uneasily pitched somewhere between comedy and tragedy, never

quite finding the right tone. Any passion that might have been whipped up from this story of spurned affection, jealousy and emotional turmoil in a small village goes to ground, only bubbling to the surface in rare moments, such as the scene in which the pitiful but blundering Hegarty burns the unwanted crib.

Much of the film revolves around too-familiar rural stereotypes. The headstrong young heroine who defies the prevailing moral code, the fervently superstitious parish and its hecktoring priest, the gossips with wagging tongues, the dejected policeman desperately clinging to the wagon – all these might belong to that everyday story of country folk, *The Archers*. The verdant rolling landscapes serve to remind the audience that this is the lush land of the blarney stone, and a miracle occurs as a blind woman regains her sight during a bungled magic act. An IRA sub-plot equally magically disappears towards the end.

The rather hackneyed conceit of using the thespian clowns – complete with garlands of fairy lights to decorate the green – to intervene in the village's melodrama somewhat labours the parallels between the theatrical and 'real-life' dramas. After watching a performance of *Othello*, Hegarty finds one of Tara's handkerchiefs in a barn and realises that she has been with Tom. The ironic allusions to *Gone with the Wind* are too obvious, though it's clear that The Playboys' pocket-size rendition of the epic film is intended to be a comic high point.

The dialogue (the script is co-penned by *My Left Foot*'s Shane Connaughton) also contributes to the film's uneven mood. There is the odd bright spot, as when the ancient blasphemy "Jesus, Mary and Joseph" is given a new twist when Tara, Tom and the baby arrive at the harvest riding on a donkey. But the film cannot make up its mind whether to be tongue-in-cheek or hand-on-heart. Ultimately, it is that much-touted 'whimsy factor' that ossifies the project from the start. Director Gillies MacKinnon, who has made such hard-edged and intense TV films as *Needle* and *The Grass Arena*, deserves more convincing and muscular material than this.

Lizzie Francke



Unquiet: Robin Wright

El Proiezionista (The Inner Circle)

Italy 1991

Director: Andrei Konchalovsky

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia TriStar

Production Companies
Numero Uno
International

Producer
Claudio Bonivento
Associate Producer
Laura Balbi
Production Supervisor
Lucio Trentini
Production Co-ordinator
Italy:
Anna Maria Galvinelli
Eric Veisberg
Antonio Gabrielli
Location Manager
Stefano Spadoni
Post-production Supervisor
Michael Saxton
Post-production Co-ordinator
Giulia Maura
Post-production Manager
Martin Bruce-Clayton
2nd Unit Director
Henry Richardson

Casting
Robert Macdonald
Perry Bullington
New York:
Johnson-Liff Associates
Assistant Directors
Felix Kleiman
Aleksandr Myagkov
Stefan Djelenev
Tamara Odinzova
Tatiana Voronova
Marina Fotieva
Elena Dorofeeva
Tamara Zueva

Screenplay
Andrei Konchalovsky
Anatoli Usov
Director of Photography
Ennio Guarnieri
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operators
Aldo Marchiori
2nd Unit:
Evgeny Guslinsky
Video
Aldo Chessari
Optical Effects
Mosfilm:
Juri Oreshkin
Editor
Henry Richardson
Production Designer
Ezio Frigerio
Art Directors
Gianni Giovagnoni
Vladimir Murzin
Special Effects Supervisor
Renato Agostini
Special Effects
Danilo Bollettini
Music
Eduard Artemyev
Music Performed by
The Soviet State
Orchestra of
Cinematography
Music Supervisor
Ray Williams
Music Editor
Bob Hathaway
Costume Design
Nelli Fomina
Chief Make-up
Giannetto De Rossi
Make-up
Nina Kolodkina
Titles/Opticals
General Screen
Enterprises
Supervising Sound Editors
Eddy Joseph
Dialogue:
Derek J. Holding
Sound Editor
Dialogue:
Richard Dunford
ADR Director
Louis Elman
ADR Editors
Alan J. Paley
Michael Hart

Foley Editor
Martin Evans
Sound Recordists
Jean-Claude Laureux
Vladimir Vinogradov
Music:
Matt Howe
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
John Hayward
Nic Le Messurier
David Anderson
Sound Effects Editor
Chris Lloyd
Archive Research
Grigory Dorofeev
Production Assistants
Olga Rumyantseva
Karen Bagdasaryan
Sergey Gessler
Pavel Plurhin
Leonid Melamud
Sergey Firstov
Film Extract
The Great Waltz (1938)

Cast
Tom Hulce
Ivan Sashin
Lolita Davidovich
Anastasia Sashin
Bob Hoskins
Beria
Aleksandr Zbruev
Stalin
Feodor Chaliapin Jr
Professor Bartnev
Bess Meyer
Katya age 16
Maria Baranova
Katya age 10
Irina Kuptchenko
Directress
Valdimir Khulishov
Colonel Schelkasov
Vsevolod Larionov
General Rumiantsev
Aleksandr Filippenko
Major Khitrov
Evdevka Germanova
Governess
Liubov Matishina
Sonia Gubelman
Aleksandr Garin
Vasily Morda
Maria Vinogradova
Fedosia
Aleksandr Lipkov
Aaron Gubelman
Antonina Anokhina
Claudia Morda
Aleksandr Sirin
Voronkin
Oleg Tabakov
Vlask
Mikhail Kononov
Voroshilov
Aleksandr Feiklistov
Bolshakov
Vladimir Stehlov
Chrustalev
Elena Borzunova
Popova
Irina Lazareva
Barbara
Vira Ekromova
Katya age 3
Ilya Chantubanov
Kaganovich
Viktor Balabanov
Molotov
Viktor Uralsky
Kilandin
Valentin Chervikov
Malenkov
Victor Tardian
Mikoyan
Ivan Teplov
Projectionist
Ivanova Petrova
Tanya
Aleksandr Pashutin
Commandant
of the Train
Sergei Arzhashev
Beria's Officer

12,329 feet
137 minutes

English version

● Moscow, 1939: Ivan Sanshin, who works as a projectionist for the NKVD, shows an audience of recruits newsreels of the heroic achievements of Soviet workers. The projector overheats and Stalin's face ignites on screen, reducing the hall to panic. Later that day, Ivan and the beautiful Anastasia (Nastia) celebrate their wedding with their neighbours in the communal flat on Slaughterhouse Street. In the night, NKVD men arrest Ivan's Jewish neighbour Gubelman. During the search, he tries to kill himself by banging his head bloodily against the wall of his room.

When there is another ring at the door, Ivan assumes they have come for him because of the accident with the projector. Instead, he is taken to the Kremlin and offered a job as Stalin's projectionist. Back at the flat, Gubelman's wife has also been arrested, and the authorities are looking for their three-year-old daughter, Katya. Nastia wants to keep her, but is dissuaded by Ivan. Ivan projects his first film, *The Great Waltz*, for Stalin and his entourage; he earns Stalin's praise. In a ruse to find Katya, Nastia applies for a job at an NKVD orphanage, but she is not allowed to remove the child.

During another Kremlin showing, the projector repeatedly breaks down. Ivan's resourcefulness earns him further praise from Stalin. Feeling a secure member of the 'inner circle', he takes over the Gubelmans' room, discreetly concealing the blood on the wallpaper. Ivan breaks his vow of secrecy and tells Nastia that he works for Stalin. Katya is now in an orphanage in the town of Pokrov. Desperate for the child she and Ivan don't seem able to have, Nastia visits her, and Katya begs to be taken away. A Kremlin colonel tells Ivan of Nastia's visits, masquerading as Katya's aunt. Appalled, Ivan has a row with Nastia, and admits to loving Stalin more than her.

June 22, 1941: With the Nazi invasion, the government is evacuated to Kuibyshev. On the train, Nastia is seduced by Beria. Ivan returns to Moscow, and Nastia later reappears, heavily pregnant and deranged. She announces that Stalin is in the Kremlin. When their co-tenant, old Professor Bartnev, agrees with this, Ivan attacks him. Returning to his room, he finds that Nastia has hanged herself. Ivan dreams of an encounter with Stalin in nocturnal Moscow. In 1953, Katya, now sixteen, appears and discovers her father's blood on the wall. Ivan gives her presents, but she leaves without them. That spring, Stalin dies. In the crowds at the funeral, Katya is saved from being crushed by Ivan, who tells her: "You are my child. You are my daughter".

● When, after 1985, a flood of hitherto censored information became available to Soviet citizens, they looked eagerly to the past in search of explanations for their disastrous present. Naturally, their attention was directed overwhelmingly to Stalin, both chronologically and



Mesmerised: Tom Hulse, Aleksandr Zbruev

morally the pivotal figure in Soviet history. At the heart of this mass retrospect was an attempt to establish the causes of the Stalin cult. Was it ignorance, innocence, indifference or fear? Since almost every Soviet family is said to have included a victim of the terror (the wife of Stalin's president, Kalinin, served a term in the camps), the first two explanations have generally been discarded.

Among the many feature and documentary films to have addressed these issues in the last few years, Semen Aranovich's *I Served in Stalin's Guard* most directly prefigures Andrei Konchalovsky's present project. *The Inner Circle* was filmed entirely in Russia; beautifully photographed by Ennio Guarnieri and designed by Ezio Frigerio - its nocturnal exteriors are especially striking - it opens ominously with the alarming accident in Ivan Sanshin's projection room (a mishap as potentially disastrous as the suspected typesetting error in Tarkovsky's *Mirror*). Konchalovsky uses the stairways and unnervingly long corridors of the Kremlin to great effect in evoking the remoteness of power, and establishes the hierarchies of subservience and humiliation among Stalin's minions in a manner reminiscent of Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*.

This contextualising is probably the film's most impressive achievement. But it is largely vitiated by an irritating habit of underlining the story for Western viewers - absurdly, the NKVD building announces itself in huge letters - and of supplying jarring allusions to what they are assumed to know about Soviet history: Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, is twice glimpsed playing in the Kremlin yard, and Beria, on learning Ivan's wife's name, exclaims: "Anastasia - just like the Tsar's daughter".

This is the first film Konchalovsky has made in Russia for over a decade, but despite his six American films he does not consider himself an émigré. In this respect, it is instructive to consider *The Inner Circle* in the already depressing context of two recent

English co-productions, Alexander Mitta's *Lost in Siberia* and Karen Shakhnazarov's *The Assassin of the Tsar*. In each of these films, Russia provides the setting, the director, a troop of experienced actors (in this case led by Aleksandr Zbruev as Stalin) and production facilities; the West provides the money, first-rate film stock, the leading actor (Tom Hulse as Ivan Sanshin follows in the footsteps of Anthony Andrews and Malcolm McDowell) and a dismaying trivialisation of the plot.

In *The Inner Circle*, simplification is compounded by heavy irony. Ivan and his wife eat caviar as the child is taken away; Stalin and his entourage watch *The Great Waltz*; "We're so lucky", says Ivan on the eve of cataclysm. Irony in turn gives way to sentimental cliché and heartstrings are tugged by regular allusions to children absent, unborn or dead. Tom Hulse is winningly eager as Ivan, and makes a good stab at the accent, while Bob Hoskins is sadly underused as the sweetly sinister Beria. But most depressing of all about *The Inner Circle* is its poverty of imagination and moral energy.

Ivan Sanshin is preternaturally gullible. He and his wife have no family (he is conveniently said to be an orphan), no friends, no context, no experience of history (the implications of the 1930s collectivisation and the earlier purges have entirely bypassed them). By choosing the 'we were naive' historical scenario, Konchalovsky has opted for evasive reiteration of platitudes rather than any attempt at moral probing or original analysis. Even the old professor (played by Feodor Chaliapin Jr), who provides the only brief articulation of dissent, conveniently suggests that Stalin is a 'mesmerist' who has ensnared the "good, naive and trusting Ivan". The film does not seem aware that the naivety it has portrayed for us is corrupt. Despite its title, the vision of *The Inner Circle*, with its inability to see its characters as more than cyphers, remains resolutely and dismayingly outer.

Julian Graffy

Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot

USA 1992

Director: Roger Spottiswoode

Certificate PG	Ray Svedin
Distributor UIP	Jeff Frink
Production Company Universal	Music Alan Silvestri
A Northern Lights production	Orchestrations William Ross
Executive Producers Joe Wizan	Music Editors Scott Grusin
Todd Black	Sherry Whitfield
Producers Ivan Reitman	Song "Undecided" by Charles Shavers, Sid Robin, performed by The Ames Brothers
Joe Medjuck	Costume Design Marie France
Michael C. Gross	Costume Supervisor Louis Infante
Associate Producers Art Levinson	Costumers Brad Anderson
Tony Munafo	Ed Fincher
Production Co-ordinator Jean Urban	Sharon Rosenberg
Unit Production Manager Art Levinson	Kim Tillman
Location Managers Huw Davies	2nd Unit: (Santa Rosa)
Lauren Ross	David Barnard
Post-production Co-ordinator Patt McCurdy	Make-up Artists Gary Liddiard
2nd Unit Directors Santa Rosa:	Dan Striepeke
Bud Smith	Christa Reusch
Los Angeles:	Title Design Saxon-Ross Film Design
Gary Combs	Titles/Opticals Pacific Title
Casting Jackie Burch	Supervising Sound Editors Larry Kemp
Extras: Central Casting	Lon E. Bender
Assistant Directors Albert Shapiro	Sound Editors Willy Allen
Albert Cho	Christopher Assells
Ruth A. Redfern	Stuart Copley
2nd Unit: (Santa Rosa)	Dino DiMuro
Ronald B. Colby	Victor Iorillo
Ruth A. Redfern	Lou Kleinman
(Los Angeles)	Glenn Morgan
Robert Del Valle Jr	Ascher Yates
Screenplay Blake Snyder	Digital:
William Osborne	David Baldwin
William Davies	Jay Richardson
Director of Photography Frank Tidy	Supervising ADR Editor Gregg Baxter
Colour DeLuxe	ADR Editors Mark Stoeckinger
2nd Unit Directors of Photography	Mary Andrews
Santa Rosa:	Foley Supervisor Dave McMoyler
Ray De La Motte	Sound Recordists Thomas Causey
Los Angeles:	Foley:
Arthur R. Botham	Greg Orloff
Camera Operators Bob Thomas	Music: Dennis Sands
Fred Smith	Dolby stereo
2nd Unit: (Santa Rosa)	Sound Re-recordists Rick Ash
Joe Thibo	Dean Zupancic
Michael St. Hilaire	Mel Metcalfe
Steadicam Operator Elizabeth Ziegler	Foley Artists Dan O'Connell
Video Playback Tim Prince	Alicia Stevenson
Editors Mark Conte	Police Consultant Danny L. Woods
Lois Freeman-Fox	Production Assistants Angela Tortu
Associate Editor Brent White	Susan Hellmann
Production Designer Charles Rosen	Kevin Holden
Art Director Diane Yates	Samantha Counter
Set Designer Robert Maddy	Steve Cowie
Set Decorator Don Remacle	Marcus Epps
Set Dressers Lavar Emert	Daniel Hadl
Martin Emert	Jadi McCurdy
Production Illustrator Sherman Labby	Louisa Santarelli
Special Effects Co-ordinator Phil Cory	Tony Solomon
Special Effects Supervisors Dave Simmons	John Perry
	2nd Unit: Jeannie Jeha
	Stunt Co-ordinator Gary Combs
	Stunts Mark DeAlessandro
	Sandra Gimpel
	Gilbert Combs
	Thomas Huff
	Robert Herron
	Gary McLarty

Aerial Co-ordinator
J.W. "Corkey" Fornof
Animal Trainer
Karen Dew

Cast
Sylvester Stallone
Joe Bomowski
Estelle Getty
Tutti
JoBeth Williams
Gwen Harper
Roger Rees
Parnell
Martin Ferrero
Paulie
Gaillard Sartain
Munroe
John Wesley
John
Al Fann
Lou
Ella Joyce
McCabe
J. Kenneth Campbell
Ross
Nicholas Sadler
Suicide
Dennis Burkley
Mitchell
Ving Rhames
Mr Stereo
Jana Arnold
Mitchell's Girl
Christopher Collins
Gang Member
Mark Mikese
Uniformed Cop
Matthew Powers
Taxi Driver
Richard Schiff
Gun Clerk

Brigitta Stenberg
Vanessa Angel
Marjean Holden
Stewardesses
Joey DePinto
Sergeant Ray Ban
Larry Campbell
Shari Ballard
Kimberley LaMarque
Amy Kirkpatrick
J. David Krassner
Detectives
Patti Yasutake
TV Newscaster
Norm Compton
Matt Johnston
A. Michael Lerner
Jophery Brown
Thugs
J. W. "Corkey" Fornof
Charles Renneisen
Pilots
John Sarviss
Helicopter Pilot
Roydon E. Clark
Manuel Perry
Justin DeRosa
Bad Guys
Ernie Lively
Man at Airport
Richard Suggett
Truck Driver
Art T. Yago
Skycap
Julia Montgomery
Shelley Hill
Secretaries
Pixie
Herself

7,871 feet
87 minutes

Joe Bomowski, a Los Angeles police sergeant, is unhappy about the break-up with his girlfriend Gwen, who is also his boss, and about the impending visit of his mother, Tutti, from New Jersey. Mom arrives with her toy dog and tins of pineapple chunks - Joe's favourite food - and sets about tidying up his happily chaotic life. After ruining his gun by washing it, Tutti decides to surprise her son with the gift of a new one.

Unable to buy one instantly at a firearms store, she is invited by Mitchell, an illegal arms dealer, to inspect his merchandise. She buys a gun, but soon after witnesses the murder of Mitchell's partner in a 'drive by' shooting. Tutti is now required to stay in LA until the crime is solved; she withholds her evidence when she is interviewed by Joe's colleague Ross, and gives her son all her information. In return, Joe reluctantly allows her to accompany him on the case.

The two visit Parnell, who is suspected of being involved in an insurance fraud after a warehouse containing arms is burned down. When Joe and Tutti check out the warehouse, they run into one of Parnell's henchmen, and Tutti saves the day after Joe runs out of ammunition. But Joe is furious when Tutti sends flowers to Gwen on his behalf, in an attempt to rekindle the romance, and Tutti leaves for home. Realising how helpful his mother has been, Joe brings her back from the airport, to find that his apartment has been broken into by Mitchell. But the latter only wants to inform them that Parnell is about to make a getaway with a stash of arms; handcuffing his mother to Mitchell, Joe heads for Ventura airport.

Tutti breaks free and follows him, and at the airport is caught by one of Parnell's men and taken aboard his

departing plane. Joe, however, manages to ground the plane, and in the ensuing gunfight, Tutti kills Parnell. With her troubleshooting days seemingly over, Tutti prepares to fly home, happy in the knowledge that Joe and Gwen are now engaged. At the airport, however, she recognises someone from the Most Wanted list of criminals. It turns out that he is wanted for murdering his mother...

After steely-eyed Clint was paired with an orangutan, and Übermensch Arnie with a whole kindergarten of moppets, mumberling Sly now tries to soften up his masculine image by teaming up with his mommie. *Stop!* casts Estelle Getty from TV's *The Golden Girls*, in which she is superb as Sofia, the arch matriarch with the gilded tongue who knows how to shoot those jibes straight. But her character's ammunition here is of the lowest grade indeed, and Getty flounders along with everybody else, including *Under Fire* director Roger Spottiswoode. British actor Roger Rees, the latest in the line of RSC types to become a Hollywood villain, is totally negligible as the dastardly Parnell.

Stop! is one of those Hollywood films in which the flimsiest of plots buckles under the most obvious of concepts. Its premise is that even tough guys have moms, but here she's not the awesome type of mother who urges her son to more despicably white-hot deeds, rather the other stereotype who brings out the baby pics, bakes his favourite cookies, and worries about him finding the right girl. The tepid protective mother gags include such embarrassingly unfunny scenes as Joe dreaming he is covering a bank raid wearing diapers while his mother pulls a bank heist in her pinny. The press notes are prefaced with an old Jewish proverb: "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers". It's a one-line joke which Woody Allen neatly nailed in his episode for *New York Stories*. *Stop!* or *My Mom Will Shoot* is an Oedipal mess which, rather than tenderising the beefcake Stallone, proves only that he is well past his sell-by date.

Lizzie Francke



After cookies, making her day: Estelle Getty

Wayne's World

USA 1992

Director: Penelope Spheeris

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount

Executive Producer

Howard W. Koch Jnr

Producer

Lorne Michaels

Associate Producers

Dinah Minot

Production Associates

Andrée Corroon

Music Co-ordinator

Arlene Matza

Supervising Music Editor

Steve McCroskey

Songs

"Wayne's World Theme"

Location Managers

Ned Shapiro

2nd Unit

Burt Aronson

2nd Unit Director

Allan Graf

Costing

Glenn Daniels

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Associate:

Monty J. Goodson

Extras:

Central Casting

Assistant Directors

John E. Hockridge

Joe Kontra

John Scotti

2nd Unit:

Pat Kehoe

Eric Wall

Screenplay

Mike Myers

Bonnie Turner

Terry Turner

Based on characters

created by Mike Myers

Director of Photography

Theo Van de Sande

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Bobby Stevens

Camera Operators

Martin Schaefer

B Camera:

David Hennings

Steadicam Operator

Elizabeth Ziegler

Video Supervisor

Liz Radley

Video Technical Supervisor

Monte Swann

24 Frame Video Displays

Video Image

Video Image Crew

Janet Earl

Fred Donelson

Steve Howard

Video Crew

Larry Potoker

Jerry Smith

Joe Unsinn

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Editors

Malcolm Campbell

Additional:

Earl Ghaffari

Production Designer

Gregg Fonseca

Art Director

Bruce Miller

Set Design

Lisette Thomas

Gae S. Buckley

Set Decorator

Jay Hart

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Tony Vandenecker

Music

J. Peter Robinson

Music Extracts

"Romeo and Juliet -

Fantasy Overture"

by Pyotr Tchaikovsky,

performed by Berlin

Radio Symphony

Orchestra; "String

Quartet in G, Opus

54, No.1 - Third

Movement" by

Franz Joseph Haydn,

performed by The

Aeolian Quartet

Music Supervisor

Maureen Crowe

Music Co-ordinator

Arlene Matza

Supervising Music Editor

Steve McCroskey

Songs

"Wayne's World Theme"

by Mike Myers, G. E.

Smith, performed by

Mike Myers, Dana

Carvey; "Bohemian

Rhapsody" by Freddie

Mercury, performed by

Queen; "Everything

About You" by

Whitfield Crane, Klaus

Eichstadt, performed

by Ugly Kid Joe; "Sound

Off" by Willie Lee

Duckworth; "Fire" by

Jimi Hendrix; "Touch

Me" by Jennifer

Blakeman, Kelly

Breznik, Danny

Johnson; "Why You

Wanna Break My

Heart" by Dwight

Willie; "Ballroom

Blitz" by Michael

Chapman, Nicky

Chinn, performed by

Tia Carrere; "Dream

Weaver" by and

performed by Gary

Wright; "Loud Love"

by Chris Cornell,

performed by

Soundgarden; "Rock

Candy" by Ronnie

Montrose, Sammy

Hagar, Bill Church,

Denny Carmassi,

performed by

BulletBoys; "Loving

Your Lovin'" by Jerry

Williams, performed

by Eric Clapton;

"Blue Hawaii" by Leo

Robin, Ralph Rainger;

"Hot and Bothered"

by Eric Brittingham,

Tom Keifer, performed

by Cinderella;

"Theme from Star

Trek" by Alexander

Courage; "Mickey"

by Nicky Chinn,

Michael Chapman;

"Sikamikanico" by

Anthony Kiedis, Flea,

John Frusciante, Chad

Smith, performed by

Red Hot Chili Peppers;

"Cold Chills" by

Donnie Purnell,

Bob Halligan Jr.,

performed by Kix;

"Foxy Lady" by and

performed by Jimi

Hendrix; "Happy

Birthday to You" by

Mildred J. Hill, Patty S.

Hill; "All Night Thing"

by Chris Cornell,

performed by Temple

of the Dog; "Ride with

Yourself" by Greg

Fields, Georg Dolivo,

performed by Rhino

Bucket; "Making Our

Dreams Come True"

by Norman Gimbel,

Charles Fox; "Feed

My Frankenstein"

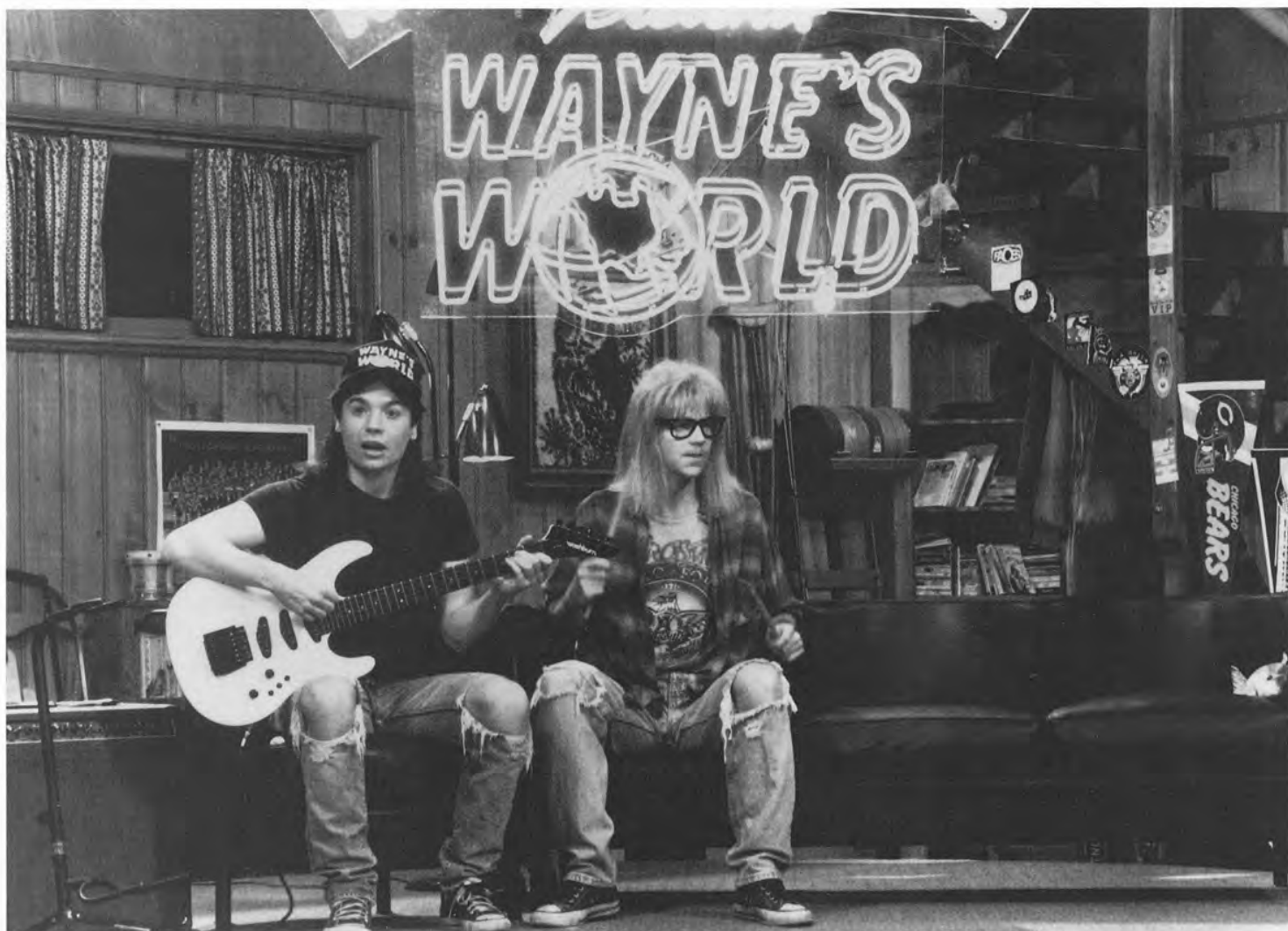
by Zodiac Mindwarp, Alice Cooper, Nick Coler, Ian Richardson, performed by Alice Cooper; "The Murder" by Bernard Herrmann; "Time Machine" by Geezer Butler, Ronnie James Dio, Tony Tommi, performed by Black Sabbath; "Mission: Impossible Theme" by Lalo Schiffrin; "Stairway to Heaven" by Robert Plant, Jimmy Page
Choreography
Foxy Lady: Peggy Holmes
Wardrobe
Supervisor: Pat Tonnema
Janet Sobel
Kimberly Guenther
Make-up Artists
Courtney Carell
Mel Berns Jnr
Body:
Marlene Lipman
Special Make-up Effects
Thomas R. Burman
Bari Dreiband-Burman
Title Design
Dan Curry
Supervising Sound Editor
John Benson
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Michael Magill
Simon Coke
Bob Newlan
Supervising ADR Editor
Allen Hartz
Supervising Foley Editor
Pamela Bentkowski
Sound Recordists
Thomas Nelson
Foley:
Greg Curda
ADR:
Bob Baron
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Andy Nelson
Steve M. Pederson
Tom Perry
Sound Effects Editors
Beth Sterner
Joseph A. Ippolito
Frank Howard
Foley Artists
Ken Dufva
David Lee Fein
Production Assistants
Billy Koch
Anna Schoeller
John Downer
Eric Newman
Ken Roth
Geoff Sudleson
Art Department:
Tom Martinez
Stunt Co-ordinator
Allan Graf
Stunts
Mike Adams
Tony Brubaker
Dave G. Efron
Randy "Fife"
Carl Nick Ciarfallo
John Hateley
Hannah Kozak
Steve Kelso
Hubie Kerns Jnr
Frank Lloyd
Curtis Lupo
Tom Morga
Bernie Pock
Gary K. Price
Anthony Schmidt
Webster Whinery
Brian J. Williams

Cast

Mike Myers
Wayne Campbell
Dana Carvey
Garth Algar
Rob Lowe
Benjamin Oliver
Tia Carrere
Cassandra
Brian Doyle-Murray
Noah Vanderhoff
Lars Flynn Boyle
Stacy
Michael DeLuise
Alan
Dan Bell
Neil
Lee Tergesen
Terry
Kurt Fuller
Russell
Sean Gregory Sullivan
Phil
Colleen Camp
Mrs Vanderhoff
Donna Dixon
Dream Woman
Frederick Coffin
Officer Koharski
Michael G. Hagerty
Davy
Chris Farley
Security Guard
Meat Loaf
Tiny
Charles Noland
Ron Paxton
Robert Patrick
Bad Cop
Ione Skye
Elyse
Frank DiLeo
Frankie Sharp
(Mr Bigg)
Eric Crabb
Guitar Store Clerk
Mark St James
Fellow Drummer
Harris Shore
Peder Melhuse
Detectives
Don Amendolia
Announcer
Carmen Filpi
Old Man Withers
Anna Schoeller
Girl Driver
Robin Ruzan
Waitress
Alice Cooper
Himself
Stan Mikita
Himself
Ed O'Neill
Glen, Mikita's Manager
George Foster
Marc Ferrari
Guitarists
Anthony Fox
Drummer
Stef Burns
Pete Freezin'
Guitar,
Alice Cooper's Band
Greg Smith
Bass,
Alice Cooper's Band
Derek Sherinian
Keyboards,
Alice Cooper's Band
Jimmy DeGrassio
Drums,
Alice Cooper's Band

8,595 feet
95 minutes

Aurora, Illinois. Teenager Wayne Campbell and his best friend Garth Algar broadcast from Wayne's basement a cable-access show, *Wayne's World*, featuring their personal thoughts on teenage life, heavy metal and girls. Benjamin Oliver, a slimy, ambitious television executive, happens to tune in to the programme and believes he can sell it to sponsor Noah Vanderhoff, who runs a chain of video



New Blues: Mike Myers, Dana Carvey

arcades. Wayne is having problems fending off his ex-girlfriend Stacy, while energetically pursuing Cassandra, a pretty Chinese singer. Garth fantasises about a dream woman who appears to him in the local diner where Wayne and Garth and their friends hang out.

Oliver approaches Wayne and Garth and pays them a substantial advance before setting up the new, 'improved' *Wayne's World*. Intent on luring Cassandra away from Wayne, he offers her a contract for a music video and sends Wayne out of town with free tickets to an Alice Cooper concert. During the first telecast of *Wayne's World*, Wayne makes fun of Noah and is rebuked by Oliver, whereupon he walks off the show. Wayne quarrels with Garth and Cassandra and also discovers he has signed away the rights to his show. But after a reconciliation with Garth, he rallies all their friends and co-opts Oliver's director Russell in a plot to save the day.

To override Cassandra's deal with Oliver, Wayne and Garth take advantage of information gleaned from a helpful roadie at the Alice Cooper concert to transmit one of Cassandra's performances from the original *Wayne's World* to the limousine of a music industry Mr Biggg. Three endings follow: a) Mr Biggg is impressed by Cassandra's beauty but feels her music act

has no potential, whereupon she takes up with Oliver; Stacy declares she is pregnant, Wayne's basement explodes along with the rest of Illinois and Wayne is left with Garth's dead body for company; b) in a *Scooby-Doo*-style ending, Oliver is exposed as old Mr Witherspoon, who runs the haunted amusement park, and is taken away by the police; c) Wayne and Garth get the girls of their dreams, Cassandra wins a music contract, and Oliver reforms.

● The teen-talk of the engagingly single-minded Wayne and Garth invites comparison with the adventures of Bill and Ted, which were similarly developed from stand-up routine into feature-length plot. But the true precedents for *Wayne's World*, which draws on characters created by stars Mike Myers and Dana Carvey for *Saturday Night Live*, are John Landis' *The Blues Brothers* (which emerged from the same source a decade earlier, with a similar format integrating music and mayhem with frame-breaking cine-literate gags) and *UHF*, starring Weird Al Yankovic, which used a trash cable television theme to link its disparate sketches.

Although many of Wayne and Garth's buzz-words ("excellent", "dudes") echo the stoned patter of Bill and Ted, there are significant differences in the teenage characterisations and the format of the movies. Unlike

Bill and Ted, who exist in a cultural and social vacuum dominated by their own band and by historical or mythic characters, Wayne and Garth are situated in a recognisable teenage milieu, where they bow down before Alice Cooper with cries of "We're not worthy", regard *Star Trek* and *Laverne and Shirley* as high culture, and make fools of themselves lip-synching to Queen.

Penelope Spheeris, whose wayward career spans Roger Corman teen-splottation, grindhouse garbage (the trash film in *Postcards from the Edge* is based on her *Hollywood Vice Squad*), rock-music documentaries and a spell as script editor on *Roseanne*, finally makes her major-studio debut here. The understanding of dead-end teen culture evident in *The Boys Next Door* and *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II* is turned to sprightly and unpredictable comic effect, resulting in a film which owes most to *Hellzapoppin!*.

A tirade against commercialism is overlaid with blatant product placement; a sub-titled conversation in Cantonese (of which Wayne has picked up a smattering to impress Cassandra) develops from halting compliments to a complex philosophical discussion; and there are enjoyably silly guest spots from Robert Patrick (in his role from *Terminator 2*), Alice Cooper and Meat Loaf, not to mention image-shattering turns from smoothie Rob Lowe

and teen queen Lara Flynn Boyle.

The best moments cunningly exploit the ramshackle nature of the whole enterprise: a running gag in which Wayne and Garth talk to the camera takes off when a minor character (Ed O'Neill) usurps the heroes' privileged relationship with the audience to confide about his tragic past, only to be put in his place with "Hey, only we're allowed to talk to the camera". The *non sequitur* plot element concerning Mr Biggg is similarly inventive, set up with cheeky woodenness in Meat Loaf's expository speech at the Alice Cooper concert ("What a helpful security guy"), and then given a triple-whammy punchline of three variously hilarious endings.

In the end, the film holds together because of the leads' adroit performances. The dialogue is consistently inventive and bizarre, whether wittering on about women ("If she were president", Garth says of Cassandra, "she'd be Abraham Lincoln!"), trauma ("When Bugs Bunny was dressed up as a girl bunny, did you ever find him attractive?"), or music (told that a band called The Shitty Beatles aren't very good, Wayne comments "So it's not just a clever name"). The film-makers' obvious affection for dead-loss teens also means that the movie never condescends to its audience.

Kim Newman

TV FILM

Common Pursuit

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Christopher Morahan

Distributor
BBC TV

Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen Two
In association with
Channel 13-WNET

Producer
Kenith Trodd

Consulting Producer
USA:
John A. McQuiggan

Production Associate
Chris Cherry

Production Managers
Linda Buxton
Melanie Dicks

Assistant Directors
Brett Fallis
Tim Stevenson
Jamie Annett

Screenplay
Simon Gray
Based on his play
The Common Pursuit

Director of Photography
Ian Punter
In colour

Editor
Dave King

Production Designer
Don Taylor

Music
Ilona Sekacz

Costume Design
Les Lansdown

Make-up Design
Frances Hannon

Sound Editor
Stephen Parkinson

Sound Recordist
Dick Manton

Sound Re-recordist
Geoff Cutting

Cast
James Fleet
Peter
Stephen Fry
Humphrey
Stella Gonet
Marigold
Kevin McNally
Stuart
Tim Roth
Nick
Andrew McCarthy
Martin
Ian Bannen
Hubert Stout
Lill Roughley
Charlotte Stout
Helen Hazeldene
Erika
Ina Clare
Waitress
Eamon Maguire
Dougan
Gerard O'Hagan
O'Leary
Philip Newman
College Porter
Bryan Matheson
Old Man

7,970 feet
(25 fps) 85 minutes

Cambridge, 1975: Six students form a new literary magazine, *The Common Pursuit*. Stuart, newly married to Marigold, is its idealistic editor. Others involved are Nick, desperately bohemian; Peter, known as the Lone Ranger for his ability to lasso the ladies; Humphrey, a languid poet-philosopher; and Martin, an American willing to finance the venture.

London, 1982: *The Common Pursuit*, edited from a dingy Soho office, is in peril. Peter, teaching at Oxford, travels down to plead its case at an Arts Council meeting, and indulge in one of his extramarital bouts at the Charing Cross Hotel. Nick deviously tries to retrieve an article, for lucrative publication in *Vogue*. Martin, due to set up as a publisher, offers to take the magazine under his wing, but Stuart – mindful of Marigold's pregnancy – intends to give up the struggle for survival. Marigold, an Open University librarian, declares she has had an abortion. The Arts Council grant materialises; Stuart, however, now decides to avoid any Establishment strings, and joins

From glittering prizes to blighted hopes



Geoff Brown

Martin instead.

London, 1985: In the midst of a tangled affair with the wife of an Oxford colleague, Peter visits Martin and Stuart's office. Another visitor, Humphrey – recently appointed Senior Moral Tutor at his Cambridge college, despite his homosexuality – attacks his philandering and intellectual sloth. Marigold, supposedly in town for a job interview, reveals that she is now pregnant by Martin, with whom she has had a long affair; Stuart, deeply wounded, nevertheless announces he has no intention of letting her go. Continuing his rise through the media, Nick becomes co-presenter of a BBC books programme.

Cambridge, 1987: Stuart's marriage has ended; Marigold now lives with Martin. The friends gather for Humphrey's funeral: he was apparently murdered – in Stuart's old rooms – after picking up some rough trade. Their minds return to that first eager meeting, when Stuart launched *The Common Pursuit* and they and the world were young.

What would BBC's Screen Two do without Oxbridge and Simon Gray's brand of literary repartee? Five years ago, his play set in a Cambridge language school, *Quartermaine's Terms*, was transferred to television; and an original tale of Oxford love and murder, *After Pilkington*, made its debut.

Undeterred by another study of Oxbridge follies in this year's Screen Two schedule (*The Last Romantics*), the Pilkington troika – Gray, producer Kenith Trodd, director Christopher Morahan – have now resurrected the author's play *The Common Pursuit* (1984), about six Cambridge graduates' fortunes in publishing, university, and bed. The title stems from the famous essay collection by F. R. Leavis, one of Gray's Cambridge teachers and the subject of *The Last Romantics*. There must be more to British society than this incestuous square dance indicates.

Gray's play arrives trimmed of its definite article, and with an imported Andrew McCarthy for the potential audience across the Atlantic. (Channel 13-WNET, the New York television station, served as co-producer.) The script retains the play's distinctive structure, using episodes scattered across two decades to chart the progress from youthful idealism to blighted hopes and the pressures of commerce.

The method encourages Gray's smart repartee and exact delineation of English types, which the cast handle with ease, though a shade too much of the unctuous Jeeves clings to Stephen Fry's poet-philosopher. But neither Gray nor Morahan allow their characters time to grow, and their woes to deepen; snapshots are all we get. Smoothly mounted, festooned with chit-chat, *Common Pursuit* never becomes more than a Screen Two potboiler.

TV FILM

The Law Lord

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Jim Goddard

Distributor
BBC TV

Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen Two

Producer
Simon Passmore

Production Associate
Ralph Wilton

Location Manager
Jacmel Dent

Casting
Ann Fiepden

Assistant Directors
Daphne Phipps
Derek Briggs
Beni Turkson
Emma Bridgeman-Williams

Screenplay
John Cooper

Director of Photography
Alec Curtis
In colour

Visual Effects Designer
Andy Lazell

Graphic Designer
Christine Büttner

Editor
Ken Pearce

Production Designer
Donal Woods

Music
Richard Hartley

Costume Design
Christian Dyll

Make-up Design
Deanne Turner

Sound Editor
Bronwen London

Sound Recordist
Derek Norman

Sound Re-recordist
Ron Edmonds

Cast
Anthony Andrews
Christopher Edwardes
Bernard Hill
Martin Allport
Tom Baker
Sir Lionel Sweeting
John Rowe
Sir Terence Calthorpe
Kate Lynn-Evans
Elizabeth Edwardes
T. P. McKenna
Judge Selwyn
Tim Preece
Professor Hamer
George Harris
John Nixon
Roger Brierley
Mr Justice Welbeck
John Stratton
Mr Justice Braxton
John Southworth
Mr Justice Cranley
Richard Bebb
Lord Chief Justice
Hipwood
Leonard Maguire
Lord Hemmingbury
John Boswall
Elderly Judge
Duncan Bell
Dorking
Rob Heyland
Treasury Barrister
Robert Swann
Alan Mountford
Harriet Reynolds
Jean Godfrey
Lucinda Galloway
Television Researcher
Tom Minnikin
Man in Silhouette
Gian Sammarco
Jennings
Ellie Beavan
Rachel Edwardes
Daniel Ryan
Matthew Warman
Stephen Donald
Animal Activists

8,450 feet
(25 fps) 90 minutes

Following the retirement of Lord Hemmingbury, the elderly Lord Chancellor, a much younger man, barrister Christopher Edwardes, is chosen by Home Secretary Martin Allport to succeed him. Edwardes is inducted into his post by his secretary Sir Terence Calthorpe, who advises him of the rules directing judges to discretion in making public statements. Following arrests in a recent case involving animal liberationists – in which a judge who had acquitted a pig farmer accused of cruelty to animals was kidnapped, photographed in a pig pen, and left for dead – permanent secretary Sir Lionel Sweeting, Calthorpe's right-hand man, is instructed to appoint a judge who will carry out the Home Office's wish for a stiff sentence. Mr Justice Welbeck is chosen, and sentences the defendants to life for murder.

Seven judges meanwhile resign over a government green paper that proposes to reform the judiciary and train lawyers specifically to become judges. Suspicious of what he sees as a government attempt to control the judiciary, Edwardes sides with the judges. Allport orders Calthorpe and Sweeting to appoint seven new judges over

Edwardes' head. Discovering that Sweeting has intercepted a confidential letter to him from his old partner John Nixon, concerning his misgivings about the liberationists' trial, Edwardes looks at the secret file on judges – jealously guarded by Calthorpe and Sweeting – and discovers that they are detailed reports designed to help weed out "rotten apples", as Hemmingbury explains it. To Allport's fury, Edwardes himself appoints the seven new judges, including Nixon.

Appearing on a TV law show hosted by retired Judge Selwyn, Hemmingbury is confronted with confidential files – leaked by Edwardes – concerning the covert practice of 'starving' (dismissing) judges who are thought to be 'unsound'. Selwyn shows Edwardes a film interview suggesting that the liberationists' trial was fixed; his office is later raided on Allport's orders. Calthorpe is removed from office and replaced by Sweeting. Edwardes discovers a file revealing that Welbeck has regularly been used by the government to deal with sensitive cases, and orders Sweeting to 'starve' him. He initiates a public enquiry into his own department, to be conducted by Professor Hamer, his former teacher at the London School of Economics. Welbeck visits Selwyn, demanding that he publicise the affair of his dismissal.

Edwardes steps up his campaign to force Allport to admit interference, but the enquiry is impeded by the destruction of the files. Allport warns Edwardes that he is prepared to clamp down on the media. At Hemmingbury's funeral, Edwardes and his family are arrested and placed in custody in the country, while Hamer is also arrested. Impeached, with all the Law Lords presiding at his trial, Edwardes conducts his own defence and accuses Allport – who has ambitions to be Prime Minister – of trying to engineer state control of the judiciary. He is acquitted, but is later assassinated at a pheasant shoot, while Allport prepares to appoint his successor.

It's a genre commonplace that television thrillers of political paranoia – *A Very British Coup*, *House of Cards*, the *Smiley* series – should have plots of byzantine complexity, equalling the British legal system itself. *The Law Lord* conforms to type, but suffers from a stifling dullness of execution, partly because its attempt to examine the moral and political greyness of the courts of law simply makes it drab and hermetic. As far as the unravelling goes, there are too many loose strands left floating (presumably they got caught in Allport's paper shredder), and a discontinuous narrative built up from extremely short scenes does not help.

Amid a sea of tight-jawed legal geriatrics, Bernard Hill is left to play the swaggering Machiavellian, combining the Kenneth Baker jaw with a hair-piece of Heseltinian foppishness. The part is barely believable, so manifestly is Allport the devil incarnate, but he

does carry the lion's share of the double talk on which John Cooper's dialogue thrives. At one point, he tells Edwardes, "Conspiracy theory went out with Thatcher" – a pointed irony in terms of the plot, but a rather weary acknowledgment of the sort of narrative conventions with which the film is saddled.

The device of the privileged insider is much the same as in *A Very British Coup*, in which a Labour Prime Minister struggled for control of his own civil service. Edwardes is even more of an insider – a one-time Conservative candidate, and anything but a boat rocker (or so Allport mistakenly believes). The irony of the situation is manifest, with Edwardes and the old guard both out to preserve the independence of the judiciary against the government, even though the judges, products of a privilege system, are the natural allies of the status quo – which makes Allport's attempt to control them altogether redundant.

The narrative flaw, however, is that Edwardes hardly changes through his discovery, but from start to finish is the generic 'man of honour' (albeit in the form of a mildly irreverent right-wing liberal) to whom legal dramas invariably resort. The kind of new values he might represent are left vague, and the film rather soft-pedals its political correctness, with sketchy, marginal parts for the black barrister Nixon and the paraplegic Hamer. Edwardes' wife and daughter, too, remain derisory hangers-on – although the latter is saddled with some improbably pointed dialogue about cleaning out the old fish pond – and the pheasant shoot that bookends the film is a rather too blatant indicator of the inexorable odds stacked against the individual. Bogged down in fine distinctions, *The Law Lord* is a dreary case of narrative pettifogging.

Jonathan Romney



For all seasons: Anthony Andrews

TV FILM

Memento Mori

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Jack Clayton

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

BBC Films
For Screen Two
In association with
WGBH, Boston

Executive Producer

Mark Shivas

Producer

Louis Marks

Associate Producers

Carolyn Montagu
Derek Nelson

Production Manager

Michael Jackley

Location Manager

Susannah Maclean

Casting

Irene Lamb

Assistant Directors

Theresa Macinnes
Emma Bridgeman-Williams
Andy Jackson

Screenplay

Alan Kelley

Jeanie Sims

Jack Clayton

Based on the novel

by Muriel Spark

Director of Photography

Remi Adefarasin

In colour

Graphic Designer

Jane Walker

Editor

Mark Day

Production Designer

Oliver Bayldon

Music

Georges Delerue

Music Performed by

Piano Soloist:

Peter Katin

Costume Design

Les Lansdown

Make-up Design

Lisa Westcott

Sound Editors

Julie Buckland

Bronwen Jenkins

Sound Recordist

John Pritchard

Sound Re-recordist

Aad Wirtz

Cast

Maggie Smith

Mrs Mabel Pettigrew

Michael Hordern

Godfrey Colston

Renee Asherson

Charmian Colston

Stephanie Cole

Dame Lettie Colston

Thora Hird

Jean Taylor

Maurice Denham

Guy Leet

John Wood

Ex-Inspector

Henry Mortimer

Zoe Wanamaker

Olive Manning

Peter Eyre

Eric Colston

Cyril Cusack

Percy Manning

Jacqueline Leonard

Gwen

Elizabeth Bradley

Mrs Anthony

Margery Withers

Grannie Barnacle

Robert Fleming

Ronald Sidebottom

Barbara Hicks

Tempest Sidebottom

Muriel Pavlov

Grannie Valvona

Damaris Hayman

Miss Lottinville

Anna Cropper

Mrs Mortimer

Paul Opacic

Jeff

Mary Healey

Ward Sister

Preston Lockwood

Deaf Old Man

Arthur Hewlett

Ancient Man

John Baskcomb

Fat Old Man

Jan Carey

Tea Shop Manageress

Leonard Maguire

Mr Willoughby

Martina Stanley

Nurse Lucy

Richard Lawry

Photographer

Dominic Taylor

Young Journalist

Terence Soall

Publisher

Walter Sparrow

Stallholder

Andrew Charleson

Policeman

Frank Shelley

The Stranger

Almee Delamain

Ambulatory Grannie

Emma Richler

Young Nurse

Alan Leith

Detective

Hilda Sachs

Brenda Cullity

Brigitte Loesser

Tea Room Trio

9,375 feet

(25 fps) 100 minutes



Dark carnival: Maggie Smith, Renee Asherson, Michael Hordern

Charmian. Dame Lettie visits Jean Taylor in the geriatric ward to discuss the phone calls which continue to plague her. Similar calls have been received by the Colstons and their circle of elderly acquaintances, and Godfrey suspects that the tormentor is his son Eric, 52, a struggling writer. Henry Mortimer, 70, a retired Chief Inspector of Police and a fan of Charmian's work, begins an unofficial investigation, quickly discovering that Mrs Pettigrew, intent on taking control of the Colstons, is heartily disliked by Charmian.

He discusses Eric with Olive Manning, 30, who good-naturedly puts up with visits from both Eric and Godfrey, who pays for the privilege of gazing at her stocking tops; the money goes towards supporting her belligerent grandfather, the poet Percy Manning, 80. She believes (correctly) that Mrs Pettigrew has got hold of letters written by Godfrey to Lisa Brooke and is blackmailing him into amending his will in her favour. To co-ordinate the available information, Mortimer invites all the recipients of the calls to his home for a meeting, but they are unable to agree about the voice they have heard. Charmian enjoys the outing, and as her books are being successfully reissued she decides to assert her independence by moving into a nursing home.

Hoping to reconcile her with Godfrey, Jean Taylor reveals to him that Charmian once had an affair with Guy Leet; Charmian counters his indignation by listing all his infidelities, and Godfrey, now guilt-free, responds to a joint blackmail effort by Eric and Mrs Pettigrew by throwing them both out. One night, Lettie is battered to death by an intruder. Mortimer discusses the case with the police, who have tape-recorded several of the phone calls; each time, only the recipient's voice is audible on the tape, and Mortimer is convinced by this that Death itself has been the caller. In the nursing home, Charmian is reunited with Jean Taylor; there is a phone call, but the friends are too busy to be interrupted.

Jack Clayton has wanted to film Muriel Spark's novel since it was first published in 1959, and had Maggie Smith in mind for the project since she first worked with him in 1964. The intervening delay has been unusual even for a director with a reputation for pausing between films, but according to Clayton it was not until *Driving Miss Daisy* established a compatibility between old age and the box office that he was at last able to make some headway. First offers came from Hollywood, but he wanted to preserve the unequivocally English spirit of the piece; the BBC was finally the answer, resulting in Clayton's first film for television. Ironically, he made *Memento Mori* after turning 70, the age at which, according to one of the elders of the story, "you become one of us".

The unexpected pleasure of the film is that Clayton has made it as an affectionate comedy. The established Clayton theme, not exactly a laughing matter, offers a baleful collusion between women on the verge of nervous breakdown and children on the verge of excessive enlightenment, and extends across the years from *The Innocents* to *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. But aside from its lightness of touch, *Memento Mori* is remarkably consistent with those dark carnivals, another reflection on a bright age overtaken by autumn, another outcry on behalf of lives that have achieved too little and must now exhaust their strength in the losing battle against decay.

Amid the many one-liners transferred intact from the novel and delivered with relish by the cast, Clayton has interestingly added (along with some more outrageous interpolations of his own) several careful references that set his toddling pensioners, clumsy and querulous as children, apart from the 'present' (a lightly sketched London of the 1950s). They have, comments one observer, "a sort of stubborn gallantry, with echoes of a romantic and glamorous past". There is also, in Clayton's emphasis, a gulf between the plight of the servant ►

◀ class, the stoical grannies brightly making the best of their regimented public ward, and that of their former employers, increasingly vulnerable and ridiculous in their attempt to keep up appearances.

The real joke, as they comment to each other, is that their youth was anything but gallant or glamorous, but consisted of unmeasured adventure, indulgence and betrayal. Prompted by the anonymous phone calls to reassess the span of their lives, they look for past achievements and find little reward in what they were and what they have become. While avoiding the banality of measuring the years in degrees of friendship, *Memento Mori* suggests that a primary defence against endless reminders of mortality is the savouring of continuity: the life-affirming feud, for example, between the poet Mannerling and his mild critic Guy Leet (é-lite?), the secret affair between the petulantly haunted Godfrey and the departed Lisa Brooke (resurrected, perhaps, as the compliant Olive), the unswerving loyalty between Charmian and Jean Taylor, her companion of many summers.

With its central thread of rather spurious mystery, its gently faded furnishings and its subtle anachronisms of costume, the story could be an Agatha Christie pastiche were it not that the participants each have secrets of their own and constantly spring surprises on each other. "Your most endearing quality", Charmian tells Godfrey at the end, when by rights all cards should be on the table, "is that you don't know me at all...". Filmed with a spectacular economy of effect and movement, *Memento Mori* keeps visual comment to a minimum. Clayton heralds the entire drama with a neat dissolve from the stopped pendulum of the opening credits to a telephone dial, and there is a tiny episode with a nurse, a rose and white curtains around a hospital bed that eloquently paraphrases several pages of the original text. Otherwise, the director lets his cast carry the load, supported by one of Georges Delerue's last compositions, a charming and delicate memorial.

A wonderful band of pseudo-ancients, disdainfully steered by Maggie Smith with a scathing repertoire of sniffs, groans and glances, these gleeful veterans exploit an array of familiar eccentricities to ruthless advantage. Stephanie Cole, in ferocious hats, again waits chin-first for God, and the superb Thora Hird seems always on the point of introducing a favourite hymn, while Michael Hordern, Maurice Denham and Cyril Cusack bluster, grumble and argue in the accustomed manner of the past half century. That the culprit of the piece turns out to be Death itself is a little hard to take, particularly in that the voices on the phone are heard by all of us. But after the riotous tea party has crashed to a close, it is no problem to agree with Clayton that the insistent calls from the dark can be ignored for a good while yet.

Philip Strick

Short films

The Big Shave

USA 1967

Director: Martin Scorsese

Distributor	Special Effects
Contemporary	Eli Bleich
Production Company	Whiteness
Martin Scorsese	Herman Melville
In association with	Song
Gevaert-Agfa/	"I Can't Get Started"
The Royal Film	performed by
Archive of Belgium	Bunny Berigan
Producers	Cast
Saul Rubin	Peter Bernuth
Elaine Attias	Young Man
Screenplay	
Martin Scorsese	
Director of Photography	216 feet
Ares Demertzis	6 minutes
In colour	
Art Director	16 mm
Ken Gaulin	

● A young man enters a blindingly white bathroom and, while Bunny Berigan performs "I Can't Get Started" on the soundtrack, he shaves. Then he obsessively relathers his face and shaves again, repeatedly cutting himself, dripping bright red blood over the clinically clean bathroom fixtures and tile floor. Ultimately, he scrapes open his own throat.

● This six-minute sick joke would seem, were it not for the ironic use of nostalgic music, more like the sort of thing one would expect from an early David Cronenberg than an apprentice work by Scorsese, concerned as it is with the wine-making process of self-mutilation. The humour and horror of the piece resides in the cool, methodical manner in which the shaver obliterates his own features, the realism of the effects – which mainly involve very red paint splashed on soap suds or gleaming bathroom fixtures – being totally at odds with the performer's attitude, which never remotely suggests pain or even pleasure, as each round of mutilation is followed by a close scrutiny of the mirror.

An *avant la lettre* instance of 'body horror', *The Big Shave* captures for the first time in colour what will become the all-important splatter-movie contrast between deep red and blinding white, later discovered by Dario Argento to be the ultimate image of sado-chic. With an end credit for "whiteness – Herman Melville", it would be a mistake to take the black joke too seriously, even though those same credits also have a 'Viet '67' notation, linking this loving self-abuse with the South-East Asian situation. Scorsese's own comment on this is revealing: "Consciously it was an angry outcry against the war. But in reality something else was going on inside me, I think, which really had nothing to do with the war". The 'something else' probably reached its fullest, self-sacrificial expression – even to the hero who 'can't get started' – in *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Kim Newman

(This film was reviewed in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1979.)

It's Not Just You, Murray!

USA 1964

Director: Martin Scorsese

Distributor	Vivian Thompson
Contemporary	Cynthia Koenig
Production	Lorraine Brennan
Company/Producer	Costumes
Department of	("Love Is a Gazelle")
Television, Pictures	Victor Magnotta
and Radio, New York	Make-up
University	("Love Is a Gazelle")
Assistant Director	Teresa Brun
Mardik Martin	Faculty Advisers
Screenplay	John Mahon
Martin Scorsese	Haig P. Manooogian
Mardik Martin	Production Assistants
Photography	Edwin Grant
Richard H. Coll	Lorraine Brennan
Graphics	
Margorie Rose	Cast
Editor	Ira Rubin
Eli F. Bleich	Murray
Sets	Sam de Fazio
("Love Is a Gazelle")	Joe
Lancelot Braithwaite	Andrea Martin
Music/Music Arranger	Murray's Wife
Richard H. Coll	Catherine Scorsese
Music Director	Mother
Leo Ursini	Robert Uricola
Music Performed by	Bernard Weisberger
John W. Dodd Junior	Victor Magnotta
High School, Freeport,	Richard Sweeton
Long Island	John Bivona
"Love Is a Gazelle"	
Performed by	584 ft
Robert Uricola	16 minutes
Susan Miller	
Sydney Ann Seide	16 mm

● Sitting in his New York office, businessman Murray leans into camera and announces the price of his tie, his shoes, his suit and, out on the street, his car. Inviting the audience to join him for a ride, he confides that his success in life is due to his pal Joe; Murray shows pictures of Joe, and scenes from his life trace his progression from one urban slum to another ("going places" says Murray) while his mother feeds him spaghetti. Joe sets him up in business as an illegal distiller of gin, until a raid ("a misunderstanding" says Murray) leads to a spell in prison. On his release, he goes back into business with Joe, this time as a producer of Broadway musicals, and meets his future wife, a pouting blonde nurse ("an angel of mercy" says Murray).

Murray tells us, to the accompaniment of "Land of Hope and Glory", how they went to the top in business,

while a montage sequence shows their racketeering. An indictment follows but Murray is acquitted; he returns triumphant and counts his wealth in the kitchen while his wife and Joe exchange caresses in the background. A further montage sequence shows Joe, Murray and Murray's wife and children ("Joe is like a second father") in happy harmony. Joe visits Murray in his office and a second 'misunderstanding' occurs, but Murray insists that the film's sound be turned off; Murray's voice-over informs us that Joe is telling it to him straight. Joe and Murray take a car ride to the waterfront and are joined by the whole cast in dancing to Italian carnival music. To a reprise of "Land of Hope and Glory", Joe and Murray pose for a photograph; the 'shot' rings out.

● *It's Not Just You, Murray!*, Martin Scorsese's second short, was made at the New York Film School in 1964, when he was twenty-two. His film-buff credentials are evident: he was influenced by the French New Wave, Italian art cinema, the new Eastern European cinema, Fellini, Casavetes ("What these films gave you was a sense of freedom, of being able to do anything...In my first movie, not one shot was a matched cut"). *It's Not Just You, Murray!* is not an experimental film, but it is vigorous and refreshing; the energetic direction coupled with the witty juxtaposition of Murray's guileless narration and scenes from his life as a small-time hood already announces a major talent.

In the way it traces a career path through Little Italy, it's also a sixteen-minute trailer for *Mean Streets* or *Good Fellas*. Murray's ultimate ambition is the attainment of "the good life", which he measures in terms of the cost of his possessions. These clearly include his wife and children: "She's still my wife, living in my home, going to parties with me", expostulates Murray when Joe reveals her duplicity (a notion reinforced by her lack of any name other than 'Murray's wife'). In Scorsese's words, it's the corrupt version of the American Dream, "accord-



Career path: Ira Rubin, Sam de Fazio, Andrea Martin

ing to which everybody thinks they can get rich quick, and if they can't do it by legal means, they'll do it by illegal ones".

However, there is a difference between *It's Not Just You, Murray!* and Scorsese's later portraits of mob and street life. In this film, there is a powerful irony which pumps out a clear moral message. If *GoodFellas*, in particular, left the audience in doubt as to Scorsese's attitudes, *Murray* clears up the doubt. When Murray relates how he and Joe put together one of the biggest 'syndicates' in America, his euphemisms are wittily juxtaposed with the realities of a hood's life: "grants and foreign aid" (picture of Arab-style gunmen buying arms), "the undertaking business" (picture of gangster being gunned down), "improvements to the motel business" (picture of prostitutes plying their trade), and so on.

The ending at the riverside is the sole note of ambiguity. Murray, one presumes, is going for his last ride, though the closing shot is a play on the photographer's 'shot' and the executioner's: one a celebration of the gangster's life, the other its termination (see the similar effect of the 'exploding' flashbulbs in *Raging Bull*, also about friendship, marriage and jealousy). According to Scorsese, this final scene was a homage to *8½* - "Because I just couldn't figure out how to end it" - and elsewhere he uses Busby Berkeley-style sequences and gangster-movie references. Looking back from *Cape Fear*, the ultimate quotation movie, the 'guilty' reflection of the 1961 original, *It's Not Just You, Murray!* seems like the innocent, youthful, uncomplicated version of *Mean Streets* and *GoodFellas*.

Bill McGreal

What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?

USA 1963

Director: Martin Scorsese

Distributor
Contemporary
Production Companies/Producers
Department of Television, Motion Picture and Radio Presentations, New York University/Summer Motion Picture Workshop
Unit Manager
Richard Klein
Assistant Director
Louise Stefanic
Screenplay
Martin Scorsese
Director of Photography
James Newman
Editor
Robert Hunsicker
Music
Richard H. Coll
Song
"Swivel-Hips Sal" by Richard H. Coll, Sandor Reich,

performed by Lew Del Gato, Ronnie Aprla, Manny Stormiolo, Robert Gil, Peter Anson, Peter Osis, Mark Trail
Sound Editor
Mara Stoller
Sound Recordist
Sandor Reich

Cast
Zeph Michaelis
Harry
Mimi Stark
Wife
Sarah Braveman
Analyst
Fred Sica
Friend
Robert Uricola
Singer

346 feet
10 minutes
16 mm

Aspiring writer Algernon, a.k.a. Harry, arrives in New York and moves into a studio, but finds himself unable to write, meanwhile becoming obsessed with a picture of a man in a



Getting started: Peter Bernuth in 'The Big Shave'

boat. At a party he throws, he meets a girl; they fall in love and marry, spending their honeymoon at the uncompleted site of the World Fair. Harry's predicament appears to be resolved, but then returns. His analyst tells him to look his problem in the face, and he finally jumps into a picture of the sea.

Scorsese's first short, with its jumpy, fast-cutting style, facetious verbal and visual punning, and self-conscious first-person narrative, could almost be seen as an early attempt to develop a style that was characteristically, neurotically of New York. That style might be defined as a hybrid of Godardian dislocation and the wisecrack comedy of the *Sid Caesar's Show of Shows* variety. In fact, Scorsese has identified the film's twin influences as being the New Wave on

the one hand (although a closer equivalent than Godard might be Malle's self-consciously flashy *Zazie dans le métro*), and on the other, Ernest Pintoff's animated short *The Critic*, written and narrated by Mel Brooks, an alumnus of the Caesar script academy.

The narrative - such as it is - is largely an excuse for a febrile succession of gags, but the hero's name also alludes to its source in a story by Algeron Blackwood. The title is something of a red herring, too, referring solely to the party sequence in which Harry meets his painter wife-to-be, and romances her in parodic slow motion. The party scene is a typical trope of fast life in the big city, a theme on which Scorsese rings the changes with determinedly downbeat humour. The opening sequence flashes through a montage of stereotypical New York skyline photos, then proceeds at the same

pace through the bland interior of Harry's apartment, which magically furnishes itself in a string of jump cuts.

To a great extent, the film seems to be a response to a dare, to see how much diverse material can be spliced together in ten minutes flat. But it also conspires to confound this purpose, cutting at one point to an extended interlude of a barbershop crooner on television, incongruously interpolated like an added attraction on the bill. Some of the better gags, in fact, are verbal, particularly the interventions of Harry's friend, who repeats verbatim what Harry has already told us in reported speech. The friend and Harry's excessively maternal analyst introduce a familiarly Scorsesean note of discomfort, exceeding the film's bounds as a skit. Significantly, they inhabit the dark, as does Harry himself at one point, staring around anxiously as the camera circles him with intent.

Essentially a clever tyro exercise, *What's a Nice Girl..* contains two telling ambiguities. First, Scorsese is working here as an urbane hipster in love with the myths of New York life, but also out to parody films that naively glamorise the city, and to signal his allegiance to the sophisticated, dislocated European school of urban film-making. And secondly, here is a Scorsese who brushes neurotic unease aside as simple material for a skit, while clearly signalling the fascination which that unease exerts. The spectacle of Scorsese learning to handle cinema is also the spectacle of his recognising the love-hate nature of his relationship with it. In the final analysis, the 'meeting cute' of the title is less between Harry and his wife than between a boy and his camera.

Jonathan Romney

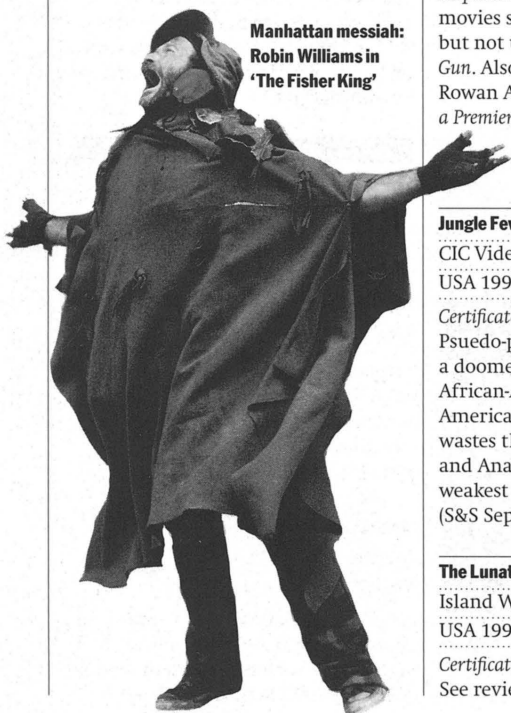


At ease with unease: Zeph Michaelis

RENTAL

Mark Kermode reviews rental/premiere videos released this month and William Green reviews retail/premiere videos

Manhattan messiah:
Robin Williams in
'The Fisher King'



Rental

The Fisher King

20.20 Vision NVT 12490
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Terry Gilliam
★ Astonishingly accomplished magical fantasy about a search for redemption amidst the malaise of modern life. Richard LaGravenese's screenplay is a mix of comic and philosophical mastery, and the lead actors (Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges and Mercedes Ruehl) are majestic. (S&S November 1991)

Flirting

Warner PEV 12333
Australia 1989

Certificate 15 Director John Duigan
★ Wonderful sequel to *The Year My Voice Broke*, bursting with laughter, adolescent desire and erotic tension. Two outcast schoolkids (a stammering boy and an African girl) find solace in one another's affections. (S&S November 1991)

Homicide

First Independent VA 20152
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director David Mamet
★ A lapsed Jewish cop becomes embroiled in a war between Zionists and anti-Semites in downtown Baltimore. Mamet's labyrinthine script blends themes of racism, prejudice and religion with hard-boiled deceit and intrigue. (S&S November 1991)

Hot Shots!

FoxVideo 1930
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Jim Abrahams
Airplane-style spoof on 'pilot-buddy' movies such as *Top Gun*. A few laughs – but not up to the standard of *The Naked Gun*. Also included is a short film with Rowan Atkinson called *Mr Bean Goes to a Premiere*. (S&S January 1992)

Jungle Fever

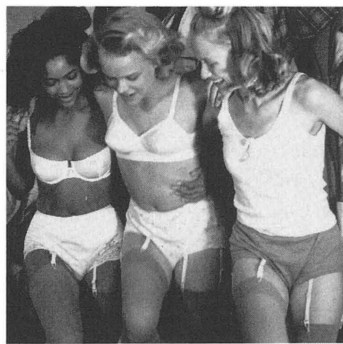
CIC Video VHB 1521
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Spike Lee
Psuedo-political blustering about a doomed love affair between an African-American and an Italian-American. This misguided film wastes the talents of Wesley Snipes and Anabella Sciorra and is Lee's weakest script to date. (S&S September 1991)

The Lunatic

Island World IWCV 1007
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Lol Creme
See review in this issue's film section



Golden-rule days in 'Flirting'

Other People's Money

Warner PEV 12223
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison
Danny DeVito dominates this lively but flimsy tale of greed, lust and doughnuts. Wall Street mogul "Larry the Liquidator" (Gordon Gekko with a sense of humour) attempts to asset-strip a small business. (S&S December 1991)

Point Break

FoxVideo 1870
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Kathryn Bigelow
★ More testosterone per frame than any other film! A surfing honcho-cum-bankrobber (Patrick Swayze) is pursued by an undercover FBI agent (Keanu Reeves). Breath-taking action including surfing and parachuteless skydiving. (S&S December 1991)

Shattered

Columbia TriStar CVT 13214
USA 1991

Certificate 15
Director Wolfgang Petersen
★ A businessman (Tom Berenger) suffering from amnesia pieces together his past with horrifying results in this visually impressive adaptation of Richard Neely's novel *The Plastic Nightmare*. Illogical but irresistible. (S&S November 1991)

Soapdish

CIC Video VHA 2554
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Michael Hoffman
Somewhat redundant but sporadically amusing parody of US daytime TV soaps. Good comic performances from Kevin Kline and Robert Downey Jr and for once Sally Field's whining histrionics are appropriate. (S&S September 1991)

Tales from the Darkside: The Movie

Columbia TriStar 12608
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director John Harrison
Horror portmanteau, heavy on special effects make-up but lacking in a unifying vision. George Romero provides the script for a section adapted from Stephen King's short story "Cat from Hell". (S&S February 1992)

True Identity

Touchstone D312562
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Charles Lane
Patchy comic reworking of themes better dealt with in *Watermelon Man*. Lenny Henry disguises himself as a white man to evade Mafia attentions. Impressive make-up work by the Dick Tracy team and a strong performance by Henry. (S&S November 1991)

Rental premiere

Aces: Iron Eagle III

Guild 8670
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director John Glen
Producer Ron Samuels Screenplay Kevin Elders, Jo Napoleon Lead Actors Louis Gossett Jr, Rachel McLish, Paul Freeman, Christopher Cazenove
95 minutes

A group of caricatured, retired air-aces from various countries take to the sky in search of murderers, drug-runners and exiled Nazis. Silly but rather jolly nonetheless.

Bed of Lies

Warner PEV 12453
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director William A. Graham Producer Andrew Gottlieb Screenplay John Ireland, based on the book *Deadly Blessing* by Steve Salerno Lead Actors Susan Dey, Chris Cooper, G.W. Bailey, John Anderson
91 minutes

True-life TV drama about a waitress who murders her upcoming Texan politician husband. Standard fare enlivened by Dey's strong performance and Graham's gruelling depiction of domestic violence.

By the Sword

EV EVV 1200
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Jeremy Paul Kagan Producers Rob Straight, Bob Demchuck Screenplay John McDonald, James Donadio Lead Actors Eric Roberts, F. Murray Abraham, Chris Rydell, Mia Sara
91 minutes

★ Terrific romp about aspiring fencing champions under the instruction of a dashing blade, Alex Villard (Roberts), and his challenging rival F. Murray Abraham. Wry performances, and a disco-beat workout... yes it's "Dirty Fencing".

Conagher

First Independent VA 20151
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Reynaldo Villalobos Producer John A. Kuri Screenplay Jeffrey M. Meyer, Sam Elliott, Katharine Ross, based on the novel by Louis L'Amour Lead Actors Sam Elliott,

Katharine Ross, Barry Corbin, Billy Green Bush 112 minutes
Slow and moody but rewarding adaptation of L'Amour's Western romance. Ross is dandy as the independent Evie whose hotel attracts the eponymous butch hero.

Dark Avenger

Columbia TriStar CVT 13535
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Guy Magar
Executive Producers Frank Lupo, John Ashley Screenplay Frank Lupo Lead Actors Leigh Lawson, Maggie Han, Robert Vaughn 90 minutes
Made-for-TV cross between *The Phantom of the Paradise* and *The Punisher*. Tough (but fair) Judge Paul Cain is hideously disfigured by a murder attempt and retreats to a hi-tech, crime-fighting sanctuary. Unsurprising, but efficiently directed.

Dark Secrets

Excilibur/Genesis EXC 0041
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Directors Mimi Leder, Art Harris Producer Julie Anne Weitz Screenplay Robert L. Freedman, Selma Thompson Lead Actors Pamela Reed, Dwight Schultz 95 minutes
TV movie about Dee Johnson's true eight-year pursuit by the FBI following her escape from a maximum security prison. Shultz plays the beleaguered husband unaware of his wife's criminal history.

Hollister

CIC Video VHA 1554
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Vern Gillum Producer/Screenplay Robert Ward Lead Actors Brian Bloom, Jamie Rose, Jorge Gervera Jnr, David Carradine 92 minutes
Outmoded Western with neither grit nor truth. A womanising gunslinger seeks revenge for the death of his brother. Carradine provides the only authentic note as the local sheriff.

Inner Sanctum

Columbia TriStar CVT 13683
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Fred Olen Ray Producer Alan Amiel Screenplay Mark Thomas McGee Lead Actors Tanya Roberts, Margaux Hemingway, Joseph Bottoms, Valerie Wildman, William Butler 90 minutes
So-called 'erotic thriller' with higher aspirations (or pretensions) than one would expect from Fred "King of Sleaze" Ray.

In the Best Interest of the Children

Odyssey ODY 315
USA 1992

Certificate 15 Director Michael Rhodes Producer NBC Productions Screenplay Judd Kinberg, Peter Nelson Lead Actors Sarah Jessica Parker, Elizabeth Ashley, Sally Struthers, Lexi Randal 92 minutes

True-life TV drama about a family of young children torn between loving foster parents and a mentally unstable mother.

Knight Rider 2000

CIC Video VHA 2554
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Alan Levi Producer Chuck Sellier Screenplay Alan Levi Lead Actors David Hasselhoff, Edward Mulhare, Susan Norman, Carmen Argenziano 91 minutes
Inventive update of the daft TV sci-fi series which smartly places the action ten years hence. Hasselhoff (dreadful as always) is called out of retirement with his car to uncover an illegal supplier of handguns.

Mutronics: The Movie

Medusa MO374
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Directors Steve Wang, Screaming Mad George Producer Brian Yuzna Screenplay Jon Purdy Lead Actors Mark Hamill, Vivian Wu, Jack Armstrong, Jimmy Walker, David Gale 84 minutes
Yuzna's long-awaited project (originally called *The Guyver*) is based on the cult Japanese comic strip by Yoshiaki Takaya. Mutant beasts battle over a magical unit which generates monstrous body armour. Effects men turned directors Wang and George create what is essentially a Mexican wrestling movie with rubber suits – non-stop fights and latex galore.

One Against the Wind

Odyssey ODY 318
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Larry Elikann Producer William Hill Screenplay Chris Bryant Lead Actors Judy Davis, Sam Neill, Anthony Higgins, Denholm Elliott, Christien Anholt 96 minutes
Surprisingly thoughtful, true TV drama documenting the wartime heroism of British aristocrat Mary Lindell. Strong performances by the fine cast.

Roots of Evil

Warner PEV 32038
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Gary Graver Producer Sidney Nierkerk Screenplay Adam Berg Lead Actors Alex Cord, Delia Shephard, Charles Dierkop, Jillian Kesner 94 minutes
The usual scenario of a mother-fixated psycho who stalks prostitutes, with a silly script and suitably seedy direction. Dierkop is entertainingly ludicrous as the serial killer and Delia Shephard does her obligatory routine as a leather-clad dominatrix.

Schizo

Medusa MO 342
Yugoslavia 1989

Certificate 18 Director Manny Coto Producer Luigi Cingolani Screenplay Keaton Jones Lead Actors Lisa Aliff, Aron Eisenberg, Christopher McDonald, Vincent Schiavelli 87 minutes
Retitling of *Playroom*, a standard haunted-castle romp spiced-up by a Yugoslavian location. An archeologist continues his father's search for a legendary tomb and unearths a murderous past.

Servants of Twilight

First Independent VA 20153
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Jeffrey Obrow Producer Venetia Stevenson Screenplay Jeffrey Obrow, based on the novel by Dean R. Koontz Lead Actors Bruce Greenwood, Belinda Bauer, Grace Zabriskie, Richard Bradford 92 minutes
TV-movie adaptation of Koontz's *Omen* rip-off. A group of religious nutters (lead by Zabriskie in yet another psycho role) fail miserably to kill a young boy who they believe is the Antichrist. A plodding plot with a wholly unsurprising 'surprise' end.

Shadow of a Doubt

CIC Video VHA 1529
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Karen Arthur

Producer David Rosemont Screenplay John Gay, based on the screenplay by Thornton Wilder, Sally Benson, Alma Reville Lead Actors Mark Harmon, Diane Ladd, Margaret Welsh, Norm Skaggs, Tippi Hedren 96 minutes
Unnecessary TV remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 classic.

Showdown in Little Tokyo

Warner PEV 12311
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Mark Lester Producers Mark Lester, Martin E. Caan Screenplay Stephen Glantz Lead Actors Dolph Lundgren, Brandon Lee 76 minutes
Macho martial-arts movie, marred by such tasteless sexism as naked women being used as platters for sushi. The production is glossy, but it suffers from erratic editing.

Sometimes They Come Back

EV EVV 1219
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Tom McLoughlin Producer Michael S. Murphey Screenplay Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal Lead Actors Tim Matheson, Brooke Adams, Robert Rusler, Chris Demetral, William Sanderson 97 minutes
Superior TV adaptation of a predictable Stephen King short story. A man's return to his home town stirs the ghosts of his brother's killers. Nicely nasty performances by the baddies and some original special-effects make-up.

Who Will Love My Children?

Odyssey ODY 316
USA 1983

Certificate PG Director John Erman Producer Paula Levenback Screenplay Michael Bortman Lead Actors Ann-Margret, Frederick Forrest, Cathryn Damon, Donald Moffat 96 minutes
True-story TV drama about a dying woman's search to find foster parents for her children. A real tear-jerker with an Emmy award-winning performance by Ann-Margret.

Retail

American Kickboxer 1

Warner PES 32021
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Frans Nel John Barrett and Keith Vitali defend democracy with their bare fists and stockinged feet.
(S&S July 1991, Rental Premiere)

American Ninja 4: The Annihilation

Warner PES 54228
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Cedric Sundstrom Martial-arts ace Michael Dudikoff fights it out with the Ninjas in Africa.
(S&S May 1991, Rental Premiere)



Meeting cute: Keanu Reeves, Patrick Swayze in 'Point Break'

Awakenings

Columbia TriStar CVR 22460
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Penny Marshall
Story of the drug L-DOPA and its miraculous but temporary effect on sleeping sickness patients in the late 60s. Large doses of saccharine hinder the otherwise fine performances of Robin Williams and Robert De Niro. (MFB No. 686)

The Big Combo

Seventh Art SAR 002
USA 1955 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Joseph H. Lewis
★ The best work of this cult B-movie director and a drama that is often cited as among the most accomplished film noir movies of the 50s. A twisted cop hunts down a gangster, more out of sexual jealousy than a concern for justice. Exceptional photography. B/W (MFB No. 555)

Breaker Morant

Braveworld Premiere STV 2124

Australia 1979 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Bruce Beresford
Three Australian lieutenants in South Africa during the Boer War are unjustly prosecuted for the murder of some Boer prisoners. Well-acted court-martial melodrama. (MFB No. 559)

La Cage aux folles

MGM/UA PES 99235

France/Italy 1978 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Edouard Molinaro
High camp farce about a gay couple's attempts to play straight when meeting the prim parents of their son's fiancée. Subtitles (MFB No. 552)

Death Warrant

Warner PES 52170

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Deran Sarafian
On the hunt for a psycho killer, dogged detective Jean-Claude Van Damme is sent undercover as an inmate of an LA prison. Much macho posturing. (S&S May 1991)

Detour

Seventh Art SAR 001

USA 1945 Price £12.99

Certificate U Director Edgar G. Ulmer
Saul Bass' title sequence probably took longer to make than the whole movie (reportedly six days). A jaded nightclub pianist accidentally gets involved in blackmail and death. Ulmer lifts the flimsy story above budgetary constraints. B/W (MFB No. 154)

Dreams (aka Akira Kurosawa's Dreams)

Warner PES 11911

USA 1990 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Akira Kurosawa
Eight disparate short tales spun by the veteran of Japanese cinema. Two or three astonishing visionary episodes

punctuate much slow, earthbound material. Subtitles (MFB No. 677)

An Enemy of the People (Ganashatru)

Connoisseur CR 072

India 1989 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Satyajit Ray
Ibsen's play of small-town politics and dirty tricks was originally filmed in 1977 in a stodgy version with Steve McQueen. Ray's hesitant transposition, with Soumitra Chatterjee as the incorruptible doctor, is no improvement. Subtitles (MFB No. 672)

4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle

(4 aventures de Reinette & Mirabelle)

Artificial Eye ART 030

France 1986 Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Eric Rohmer
★ The fragile friendship of two young students – country mouse Reinette and streetwise Mirabelle – is cemented by several formative experiences. A delicate, quintessential Rohmer film. Subtitles (MFB No. 649)

Heart Condition

Columbia TriStar CVR 21614

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director James D. Parriott
Terminally confused comedy thriller with Bob Hoskins as a bigoted LA cop who gets Denzel Washington's heart (and talkative ghost) after a cardiac operation. (MFB No. 682)

Hiroshima mon amour

Connoisseur CR 069

France/Japan 1959 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director Alain Resnais
★ A Frenchwoman (Emmanuelle Riva) and a Japanese man (Eiji Okada), both shattered by World War II, are drawn together in their efforts to come to terms with the recent past. A complex narrative woven by Resnais and novelist/scriptwriter Marguerite Duras. B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 313)



Time slips: Emmanuelle Riva, Eiji Okada

House of Games

Connoisseur CR 067

USA 1987 Price £14.99

Certificate 15 Director David Mamet
★ Swindles within scams within confidence tricks as a woman psychiatrist becomes fascinated with the methods of a gang of sharpsters. Playwright Mamet's first film stars his ex-wife Lindsay Crouse and Joe Mantegna. (MFB No. 647)

House Party

Columbia TriStar CVR 21616

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Reginald Hudlin
Tame rap music, 'beach party'-style movie with an enthusiastic cast of black teenage actors. (MFB No. 680)

Ivan's Childhood (Ivanovo Detstvo)

Artificial Eye ART 031

USSR 1962 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Andrei Tarkovsky
★ Tarkovsky's first film follows the heroic career of a Soviet soldier on the Eastern front, hijacking its patriotic story for an exploration of the Russian soul on deeper levels. B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 654)

Kid

EV EVS 1061

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18
Director John Mark Robinson
C. Thomas Howell takes revenge on the citizens of a modern western town. A pale, sad imitation of several classic 'loner in the dust' films. (MFB No. 682)

Last Year at Marienbad

(L'Année dernière à Marienbad)

Connoisseur CR 068

France/Italy 1961 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Alain Resnais
★ Pursuing his love object (Delphine Seyrig) in an elegant hotel, a man (Giorgio Albertazzi) is frustrated by long corridors, flashbacks, time lapses and her own denials. Famous award-winning art movie, scripted by avant-garde novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet. B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 338)

The Man with the Golden Arm

Seventh Art SAR 003

USA 1955 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Otto Preminger
Preminger, with Frank Sinatra, explores a convincing and startlingly unromantic American underworld of jazz clubs, poker dives and heroin addiction. The presentation of vice may seem dated but it has not lost all of its shock value. B/W (MFB No. 265)

Martial Law

EV EVS 1062

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director S.E. Cohen
Kickboxing star Cynthia Rothrock teams up with Chad McQueen (son

of Steve) as a couple of vice cops who bring rough justice to the LA gang scene. (S&S May 1991, Rental Premiere)

Milou en mai

Warner PES 35273

France/Italy 1989 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Louis Malle
★ Delightful comedy-satire about a provincial landowner (Michel Piccoli) who struggles to organise a quiet family funeral during May 1968, while the rest of the nation is on strike or contemplating revolution. Subtitles (MFB No. 677)

The Package

MCEG Virgin VVD 1006

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Andrew Davis
Routine political thriller that requires the ageing Gene Hackman to run puffing around Chicago in pursuit of an assassin. (MFB No. 677)

The Rookie

Warner PES 12061

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Clint Eastwood
New boy Charlie Sheen joins grizzled Clint Eastwood on patrol with the Police Grand Theft Auto division. Male bonding to the sound of screaming tyres and smashing cars. (MFB No. 685)

School Daze

Columbia TriStar CVR 21633

USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Spike Lee
Lee's second film was a frenetic, confused, all-black campus musical about a war between the light-skinned 'wannabees' and the darker-skinned 'jigaboos'. Its commercial failure was, on the whole, well-deserved. (MFB No. 655)

Stockade

EV EVS 1067

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Martin Sheen
A Sheen family movie with the director playing opposite his son Charlie in a sweaty, hard-swearing military prison film. (MFB No. 683)

Suddenly

Seventh Art SAR 004

USA 1954 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Lewis Allen
Little-seen paranoia thriller along the lines of *The Desperate Hours*, with Frank Sinatra as the leader of a gang of presidential assassins who hole up in a small-town family home. B/W (MFB No. 250)

Things Change

Connoisseur CR 067

USA 1988 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director David Mamet
★ A shoe-shine man is passed off as a Mafia don so as to take the rap for

a murder. Old hand Don Ameche outplays Mamet's favourite actor Joe Mantegna in a fine comedy of mistaken identity. (MFB No. 661)

Wired

EV EVS 1039

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Larry Peerce
The high life and fast times of comedian John Belushi which accelerated into nightmare and a sordid death. The film suffers from wild mood swings, and Michael Chiklis as Belushi can only offer the barest sketch of an inimitable actor. (MFB No. 669)

Zandalee

ITC 8005

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Sam Pillsbury
Dull 9 1/2 Weeks clone with Nicolas Cage and Erika Anderson enacting soft-core erotic scenes. (MFB No. 687)

Retail premiere

The Ascent (Voskhozhdenie)

Connoisseur CR 070

USSR 1976 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director Larisa Shepitko
Production Company Mosfilm Screenplay Yuri Klepikov, Larisa Shepitko, based on the novella *Sotnikov* by Vassil Bykov
Lead Actors Boris Plotnikov, Vladimir Gostiukhin, Anatoli Solonitsin
105 minutes

★ A harrowing account of resistance and suffering in Byelorussia under the Nazis, this was Shepitko's last completed film before her tragic early death. A little seen masterpiece that is unequalled for its bleak landscapes and tormented symbolism.

B/W Subtitles

Fist of the North Star

Manga/Island World MANV 1001

Japan 1990 £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Toyoo Ashida
Screenplay Buron-son Animation Tetsuo Hara 112 minutes

Animated film of standard teen heroics, developed from the popular manga comic books and a Japanese TV series and, with its violent content, aimed at adults.

The Flash

Warner PES 12146

USA 1990 £10.99

Certificate PG Director Robert Iscove
Producer Don Kurt Screenplay Danny Bilson, Paul Demeo Lead Actors John Wesley Shipp, Amanda Pays, Michael Nader 90 minutes

A lab accident turns a police chemist into a mutant avenger. Based on the DC Comics, this lumbering pilot for a TV series is intended for family entertainment.



A question of paternity: Krystyna Janda in 'Dekalog' (2)

Frankenhooker

Polygram MED 12662

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Frank Henenlotter Producer Edgar Levine
Screenplay Robert Martin, Frank Henenlotter Lead Actors James Lorinz, Patti Hollen, Charlotte Helmkamp
81 minutes

From the director of *Brain Damage* and both *Basket Case* films, this has been aptly described as "a tale of sluts and bolts". After losing his girlfriend in a lawnmower accident, a teen scientist attempts to put her back together with body parts taken from the local red light district.

Ganglands

Braveworld STV 2093

USA 1991 £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Larry Peerce
Producer Richard Maynard Screenplay Pete Hamill Lead Actors Ray Sharkey, Gary Busey, Martin Landau, Dylan McDermott 117 minutes
Copycat casino drama cashing in on the fame of slicker films like *Too Hot to Handle* and *Bugsy*. Gary Busey plays a casino owner defending his patch against mafioso Ray Sharkey.

Gate II

Braveworld STV 2092

Canada/USA 1988 £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Tibor Takacs
Producer John Kennedy Screenplay Michael Nankin Lead Actors Louis Tripp, James Villemare, Pamela Segall, Simon Reynolds 89 minutes
A sequel to Takacs' not so scary 1987 film. Although its 'dungeons and dragons' special effects are adequate, it hardly warrants a release after being on the shelf for three years.

Halloween 5

Braveworld STV 2126

USA 1989 £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Dominique Othenin-Girard Producer Mustapha

Akkad Screenplay Michael Jacobs
Lead Actors Donald Pleasence, Danielle Harris 97 minutes
Maniac Michael Myers reappears in yet another hunt for female flesh. With Donald Pleasence in his fourth Halloween as psychiatrist Dr Loomis.

Stepfather II

MCEG Virgin VVD 1044

USA 1989 £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Jeff Burr
Producers William Burr, Darin Scott Screenplay John Auerbach Lead Actors Terry O'Quinn, Meg Foster, Jonathan Brandis, Caroline Williams
84 minutes
Another serial killer embarks on a cinematic slasher spree. Smiling villain O'Quinn repeats his established trick of insinuation and adoption into a respectable household.

The Ten Commandments (Dekalog)

(1) I Am the Lord thy God. Thou Shalt Have No Other God But Me (2) Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the Lord thy God in Vain (3) Honour the Sabbath Day (4) Honour thy Father and thy Mother (5) Thou Shalt Not Kill (6) Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery (7) Thou Shalt Not Steal (8) Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness (9) Thou Shalt Not Covet thy Neighbour's Wife (10) Thou Shalt Not Covet thy Neighbour's Goods

Artificial Eye ART 024A/024B

Poland 1988 £22.49 each (two double boxed sets: Parts 1-5 and Parts 6-10)

Certificate 15 Director Krzysztof Kieślowski Screenplay Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz
Photography (1-10) Wiesław Zdort, Edward Klosinski, Piotr Sobocinski, Krzysztof Pakulski, Sławomir Idziak, Witold Adamek, Dariusz Kuc, Andrzej Jarosiewicz, Piotr Sobocinski, Jacek Blawut Editor Ewa Smal Lead Actors (1) Henryk Baranowski, Wojciech Kłata, Maja Koronowski (2) Krystyna Janda, Aleksander Bardini, Olgierd Łukaszewicz (3) Daniel Olbrychski, Maria Pakulnis, Joanna Szczepkowska (4) Adrianna Biedrzyńska, Janusz Gajos, Artur Barcis (5) Mirosław Baka,

Krzysztof Globisz, Jan Tesarz (6) Grazyna Szapolowska, Olaf Lubaszenko, Stefania Iwinska (7) Anna Polony, Maja Barelkowska, Władysław Kowalski, Bogusław Linda (8) Maria Kosińska, Teresa Marczevska, Artur Barcis, Tadeusz Lomnicki (9) Ewa Blaszczyk, Piotr Machalica (10) Jerzy Stuhr, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Henryk Bista 10 hours
★ Ten tales set on and around a Warsaw housing estate, whose residents will be familiar to those who have seen *A Short Film about Killing* and *A Short Film about Love* – feature-length versions of Commandments Five and Six. Kieślowski's epic project is an unblinking analysis of the moral shortcomings of Poland, directed with a wry sense of gloom that masks a hidden fund of human sympathy. Subtitles

An Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano (Neokonchennaia piesa dla mekhanicheskovo pianino)

Connoisseur CR 071

USSR 1976 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Nikita Mikhalkov
Production Company Mosfilm Screenplay Aleksandr Adabashian, Nikita Mikhalkov, based on the play *Platonov* by Anton Chekhov Lead Actors Alexandr Kaliagin, Elena Solovej, Eugenia Glushenko, Antonina Shuranova, Nikita Mikhalkov
100 minutes

★ Two former lovers, encumbered with dim and unsuitable spouses, meet up again at a party in a country house. Mikhalkov's well-acted but undemanding film is a bittersweet adaptation of Chekhov's early play *Platonov*. Subtitles.

Retail collection

Woody Allen Collection:

Another Woman

USA 1988 Certificate PG

Broadway Danny Rose

USA 1984 Certificate PG

Crimes and Misdemeanours

USA 1989 Certificate 15

Hannah and Her Sisters

USA 1986 Certificate 15

The Purple Rose of Cairo

USA 1984 Certificate PG

September

USA 1987 Certificate PG

MCEG Virgin VVD

1021/417/1007/419/418/1022

Price £10.99 each

Director Woody Allen

★ Six of Allen's most recent films (excluding *Radio Days* and *Alice*). The collection illustrates Allen's abandonment of his mid-80s gentle comedies (*Danny Rose*, *Rose of Cairo*) to concentrate on more serious themes. (MFB Nos. 667/608/679/630/618/654)

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SEX, COMEDY AND TILDA SWINTON?

As the current film season at the Goethe-Institut shows, women directors have brought all this and more to the German cinema.

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11 May-18 June

surveys the enormous range of feature films by directors such as Margarethe von Trotta, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Ulrike Ottinger and Doris Dörrie. **Highlights** include visits by the following directors who will discuss their work:

- | | |
|---------|---|
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| 9 June | Monika Treut presents her provocative <i>VIRGIN MACHINE</i> . |
| 18 June | Jutta Brückner presents her latest film <i>COLOSSAL LOVE</i> . |

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Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071-436 2327

Different standards?

From John Paton

When *Prospero's Books* was released for the cinema it had a Certificate 18, but you report that the video has Certificate 15 (S&S April). Does this mean that the video version has been cut, or that the video classifiers have different standards? Either explanation would be worthy of mention in a review, but you don't make any comment. London W14

● Mark Kermode replies: Under the Video Recordings Act, videos are classified more harshly than cinema releases; many films rated 15 in the cinema are rated 18 on video, or cut to preserve a 15 certificate (eg *Terminator 2*). *Prospero's Books*, however, was rated 15 both on film and video, in identical formats.

Scorsese's rape

From Don Locke

Pam Cook is right to suggest (S&S April) that the sexual politics of *Cape Fear* are more than usually complex. Indeed, they are so convoluted that I doubt they are coherent, as if that mattered once a film gets labelled 'post-modernist'.

A fact which seems to have escaped all your writers' attention is that within the time of the movie, Cady does not actually rape anyone. Sexual assault, yes, but rape, no, because the crucial garments remain firmly in place throughout. There was a time when cinematic convention allowed couples to have sex fully clothed, or without even touching. But these days the artistic justification of sexual explicitness is often that audiences have to see it if they are to believe it. And during *Cape Fear*'s most explicit 'rape' scene, the victim is wearing, of all impenetrable items, jeans.

The unrelenting implausibility of the plot (the audience was laughing when I saw the film) might suggest mere carelessness on the director's part. But Scorsese appears to have switched genres from thriller to horror in order to eschew realism. We are talking here about visual detail, and that, surely, is not something he takes lightly. It is, therefore, disturbing that so many critics have failed to see what is actually up there on the screen.

Leamington Spa

● Pam Cook replies: It is an important point that Cady does not succeed in raping Leigh in the climactic sequence of *Cape Fear*. If I remember correctly, Cady attacks Leigh, but then turns his attention to bring Danielle up from the hold, whereupon the latter sets fire to him by throwing lighter fluid at him when he lights a cigar. This is one of those significant table-turning moments characteristic of rape-revenge horror.

The fact that Leigh and Danielle are constantly threatened by Cady, a convicted rapist, and that they (and Sam, and the audience) believe that he intends to rape them, while the moment is endlessly deferred, is part of Scorsese's elaboration of the suspenseful masochistic aesthetic. The audience's laughter is as important a response as fear or disgust – it releases tension, provides a defence against unwelcome feelings and registers the spectators' de-

lighted awareness of being at the film-makers' mercy.

There clearly is a difference – in outcome, if not in psychological effect on the victim – between being threatened or attacked by a rapist and being physically raped. However, it seems to me unnecessarily legalistic – and evasive – to insist on a distinction between sexual assault and rape when Scorsese's film blurs such distinctions. What is at stake here is not whether rape is actually seen to occur in the movie (Scorsese's films are usually reticent about showing the sexual act), but the process of victimisation/feminisation itself, not simply as it affects the characters, but in the way it involves the cinema audience. This uncomfortable issue extends beyond the parameters of *Cape Fear* the movie.

Liking Lindsay

From Adrian Turner

In his article on Lindsay Anderson (S&S May), Bernard Kops, for no apparent reason, quotes me as saying to Lindsay, "I must admit I do not like your films". On the contrary, I must admit to always having liked Lindsay's films and wish there were more of them to like. And if I didn't like Lindsay's films, who cares anyway? It would be a braver man than I to admit it to his face. London W5

Government (in)action

From Andrew McSkimming

The crisis of Palace Pictures is one more nail in the coffin containing the rapidly expiring British Film Industry.

Indigenous production is at all time low, and market domination by Hollywood product is complete. We should not blame the Americans, though. The complete absence of any competition simply makes it easier for even mediocre American films to clean up at the British box office.

The attitude of the government to the film industry remains one of dismissal and neglect, while confidence within the industry has hit rock bottom. One after the other, the companies that provided some glimmer of hope in the 80s – Goldcrest, Virgin, Handmade, etc – have given up, with only Channel 4 struggling on. Our directorial talent is wasted. John Boorman is marginalised, unwilling to compromise by making Hollywood movies, and unable to get the backing to make the films he wants to make. Neil Jordan, Bill Forsyth, Nicolas Roeg are forced into making Hollywood movies unsuited to their natural talents. Only Derek Jarman and to a lesser extent Ken Russell struggle on trying to make British films in Britain.

Why? The answer would appear to be that the government has no interest in preserving a national cinema, one which speaks for and reflects the fears, hopes, concerns and aspirations of its people. Throughout the world, cinema has shown that it can be a powerful medium for discussion, debate, education and social and political change, as well as for entertainment. The need for such a national cinema in Britain in the 90s is as great as it ever was, perhaps more so for a country seemingly unsure of its place in the world and of where it is headed.

Even with the additional revenues from television, satellite, cable and video sales, film financing is inherently risky. Virtually nobody in Britain is prepared to risk financ-



Worthy of an Oscar:
Trevor Howard in 'The Charge
of the Light Brigade'
(see Eddie's props)

ing British films. Alan Parker, arguably our most commercial director, cannot raise finance for a subject like *The Commitments* in Britain. Even Peter Greenaway now gets his financing from European sources.

It is obvious that the industry needs government assistance to stimulate investment in production. Film-makers are not asking for handouts from government, but for co-operation and partnership which will provide the right inducements to investors and actively support the growth of British films. I would like to see the government encourage young film-makers and first-time directors, as is done in France. Money should be available, perhaps from a levy on video sales, to support films made in Britain about Britain, past, present and future.

Britain has a long, proud and rich cinematic tradition. To ensure it has a future as we enter the 90s requires government action – now.

Brighton

Eddie's props

From Mark Burns

May I congratulate you on your choice of Charles Wood to write an article on the making of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (S&S May). Written with Charles' inimitable style, it paints a vivid picture of what it was like to be in Turkey in 1967 and casts a fascinating insight into the machinations that went on before filming began while we, the cast, waited and sweated to see if our dreams would be fulfilled.

Loathe as I am ever to correct Charles Wood in any way, your readers might be interested in the correct version of the Eddie Fowle story. David Hemmings and I, on one of our frequent visits to the legendary Eddie and his props truck for a cooling beer, found Eddie singing the praises of his props team, who had evidently gathered together a large number of unfortunates, with one or both legs missing, who were to be strewn around the Valley of Death. "Dip their stumps in blood – bleeding marvelous effect". "But surely", we ask innocently, "they are nothing to do with the props department?" "Course they are", replies Eddie, "take their crutches away and they're props, aren't they?"

Now I must turn to Andy Medhurst's reflection on *The Charge*. An acidulated intellectual eunuch's view if ever I read one. To dismiss the film so lightly, to praise only one performance, to label it merely as a film of its time is both casual and inept.

It is a glorious film of incredible originality. There are many great performances and Trevor Howard's towering Cardigan is worthy of an Oscar. It is a film even more of the present day than ever it was of then, as I am sure those lucky enough to have seen it recently at the NFT will bear witness to.

Prejudiced? Of course I am, but having seen it recently myself on that wonderful day referred to by Vanessa Redgrave, I do think I am also able to be thoroughly objective. What a shame that "the tribute" (your words) should have been marred by your third contributor.

York

Mark Burns played Captain Morris in Tony Richardson's film.

Corrigendum

Apologies to Pervaiz Khan, whose name we misspelt on page 30 of S&S May.

Bugging the editor

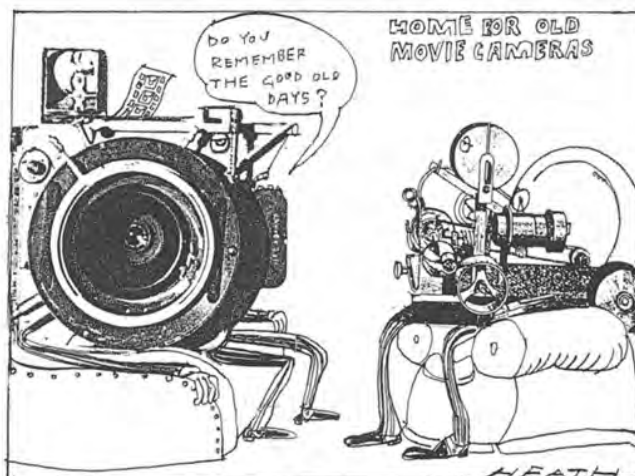
Benjamin Woolley

Unlike other misfortunes, such as hurricanes, computer bugs do not generally have names. However, they do on Lightworks, a computer I have been working with for the past two weeks. One in particular was called Olga. Quite a character, Olga, with a very precise knowledge of her victims' frailties.

Such Burroughsian bugs were one of the many unusual facilities that made the Lightworks, one of the world's first professional-grade, non-linear editing systems, such an innovation. Its main feature is the ability to store the video tapes that make up the raw material of a television programme – the 'rushes', as they are known in a quaint throwback to film – as so much digital data on a bank of computer disks for reassembly into the final cut.

One of the great shortcomings of being involved with editing is that it sounds easy. It is not. It is as difficult as it is vital to the production process. Directors will swear by, as well as swear at, their editor, because they have to rely utterly on him or her during these short fraught periods of programme assemblage. Non-linear systems are supposed to make that experience easier, particularly when it comes to editing video tape.

With film, editing is very much a physical process, a matter of delicate handiwork, with choice cuts from the reels of rushes being manually spliced up and stuck together in a new order. With video, the process is more laborious. The edited programme is built up shot by shot on a master tape by copying the bits required from the rushes tapes. To insert or remove a section in the middle, the editor either has to record over the existing shot, or make a copy of the master tape up to the point where the insertion or deletion is to be made, add or cut the material, and then copy the remainder of the programme. Not



only is this slow, but after it has been done a few times the picture has become so degraded by the process of copying as to be unviewable.

Non-linear editing is supposed to overcome this problem. All shots are equally accessible; there is no tiresome spooling through tapes (hence 'non-linear'; access is, as they say in the computing world, 'random'). They are picked out of the database (as identified by a description provided when the rushes are fed into the system in the first place, or by a frozen frame from the sequence), marked for when they should start and finish, and then inserted into the queue of shots that make up the edited programme.

Once the programme has been edited, the system produces what is known as an edit list. Given the work that goes into its composition, it is a modest result: just a list of numbers. But these numbers are a record of the origin and order of all the shots in the edit. You take this into an 'on-line' editing suite, which reads the numbers into a conventional editing machine controller,

'One of the great shortcomings of being involved with editing is that it sounds easy. It is not. Directors will swear by, as well as swear at, their editor, because they have to rely utterly on him or her'

which then reassembles ('conforms') the finished programme from the original rushes, to give as clean a picture as possible for broadcast and add any required video effects along the way.

All of which went swimmingly in our pioneering non-linear Lightworks edit. We didn't think it was the first television programme to be cut using a non-linear system, but it was certainly one of the first, and absolutely the first to be on the subject of weather and produced by the Red Green & Blue company for BBC2. Neil Hatton was the non-linear editor, one of the first examples of that breed in the country. He was in full command of the system, delivering to the programme's director, Max Whitby, the benefits of being liberated from the linear tyranny of conventional video editing.

But then the poltergeist Olga arrived, her name appearing on the system's diagnostics screen just prior to a crash which happened with increasing regularity as the edit approached completion. Nothing significant was lost (the system was crash-proofed by continuous, automatic backups), except time and patience, and the system's developers assured us (as system developers do) that she will disappear from subsequent versions of the software. Nevertheless, she was a reminder of the price of pioneering a new technology.

Notwithstanding Olga, non-linear editing must surely be the way to go. It provides a level of flexibility that is a joy to experience, an experience enhanced in the particular case of Lightworks by a pleasing, thoughtful design that should appeal to professional editors, particularly those raised on film and now suffering the pain of tangling with video tape. With a few tweaks (such as extra audio tracks), proof that some of the promised fancy features (such as being able to dissolve and mix between shots) actually work, and the exorcism of Olga, it would be near perfect.

PROFESSOR POTEMKIN'S COMPETITION

The response to our Family Plots quiz (April) was most gratifying. The correct answers are: 1. Vanessa Redgrave/Natasha Richardson; 2. Nicolas Cage/Francis Coppola; 3. Jason Connery/Diane Cilento; 4. Isabelle Pasco/John Gielgud; 5. Charlie Sheen/Emilio (or Ramon) Estevez; 6. Tippi Hedren/Melanie Griffith; 7. Warren Beatty/Shirley MacLaine; 8. Judy Garland/Liza Minnelli; 9. Klaus & Nastassja Kinski; 10. Dennis Quaid/Robert Carradine. Many runners did not complete the course. The high hurdles were Question 10, where countless entrants supposed that David Carradine (b.1936) was younger than his brother Keith (b.1951); and the sneaky supplementary to Question 4 – Gielgud's first Shakespearian film was not 'Julius Caesar' (1953), but a documentary about

his celebrated stage production 'Hamlet', made in 1939. Our winners this month are: Stephen Burton of Barrow-in-Furness; Gareth Griffiths of Cardiff; Graham Smith of Blackpool; Philip Raby of Bath; Jessica Nolfo from Connecticut. The lucky runners-up are: Joanne Barnes of Islington; Bryan Clarkson of Milton Keynes; Duncan Abell of London; Troy Spencer of Havant; and Agnese Barolo of Oxford.

You can all do better with this month's Cinephiliac competition, a quiz entitled 'Body Parts'. Knowledgeable entrants have a chance of winning one of two copies of Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Dekalog', released on four videos by Artificial Eye on 8 June. Answers by 15 June to Professor Potemkin, Sight and Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL.

1. In which film does Jean-Claude Brialy

become obsessed with the 'patella' of Laurence de Monaghan by the lake at Annecy?

2. In which film does Steve Martin play an eminent surgeon whose true love lies pickled in a bottle of formaldehyde?

3. Vincent Price's unfinished human creation can clip poodles, trim hedges, and always cuts himself shaving. What is he called?

4. According to its eccentric director, this experimental 1976 film was shot with the entire cast under hypnosis. However, the title was transparent enough. Can you name it?

5. In their sixth screen pairing, two famous MGM stars played husband-and-wife lawyers battling on opposite sides of a courtroom. Identify the film.

6. The story of the Nazi spy Cicero, valet to

the British ambassador in Turkey, was made into a thriller with James Mason. What was it called?

7. In 'Portrait of a Mobster' Ray Danton appeared as a New York gangster closely associated with Dutch Schultz. In which earlier film did he play the same character?

8. In a violent Western typical of its director, piano-player Warren Oates endeavours to carry out a bloody mission indicated in the film's title. What exactly are his orders?

9. In 1965, an eminent Japanese director made a black and white film about a hospital consultant with a social conscience. But the doctor also had a colourful nickname. What was it?

10. The Germans call this black and white film 'Der Himmel Über Berlin'. What do we call it in Britain?

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